Carrots or Maltesers: does it matter?

Context and quality: perspectives on reading and fiction for 11 – 16 year olds.

Submitted by Rosemary Hopper to the University of Exeter

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature:

Dedication

To my father who, taught me to love books:

Frank Edward Bailey

(1914 – 1966)

ABSTRACT

This research was designed to investigate issues of quality in the reading of fiction of 11 – 16 year olds in school; this included the reading of fiction as part of the curriculum and private reading for pleasure. It is research which found its roots in the surveys of children's reading habits carried out by Jenkinson (1946), Whitehead, Capey, and Maddren, (1977), Hall and Coles (1999) and Clark, Osborne and Akerman (2008). These surveys, over sixty years, show how attitudes to reading for 11 – 16 year olds, their reading habits and their preferred texts have changed. Judgements of quality in children's chosen reading are implied in those studies but criteria for these judgments of quality are not defined. The National Curriculum (NC) for England (2008) explicitly refers to texts considered to be of high quality and lists prescribed texts and authors, but does not define what is meant by quality.

The study was designed to investigate how teachers and students in secondary schools (11 – 16 year olds) in England conceptualised quality in the fiction used in class and for private reading. Individual teachers and groups of 11 – 16 year olds from four schools in the South-West of England were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The interview data were analysed using a Cultural and Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework.

The findings indicate that interpretations of quality are complex and often linked to examination syllabus requirements; the iterations of the NC for English in England; and discrete individual school and departmental needs. This can cause professional tension amongst teachers relating to the imposed rules, to external expectations and to the lack of teacher autonomy. The study offers new insights into how fiction for 11 – 16 year olds is used and conceptualised in school. This is represented theoretically through the framework of CHAT and in terms of the confusion at the intersection of boundary objects. The outcomes of the research will also contribute to clarifying how texts written for young adults may be judged and to the conceptualisation of a pedagogy to support the use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds in school.

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I would like to start by thanking the schools, teachers and young people who contributed to this research project. To the schools who gave me access; to the teachers who gave me time and honest insights into challenging areas of practice; and to the students in school for their wholehearted and enthusiastic engagement in discussions about books.

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I offer this to my children Nick, Simon and Jonathan Hopper; to Jenny Hopper and to Jasmine Hemsley; and to my grandchildren, Finley and Daisy Hopper. This is my testament to you that anything is possible if you believe in yourself; have sufficient people believing in you; and work hard for your end goal. You too can follow your dreams.

I would not be writing this without those friends who never let me give up and who never gave up on me. Who provided wine, chocolate and various shoulders to cry on as needed; who read things and who offered wise advice. To so many friends: thank you so much! Very particular thanks, in addition, to Anne-Flore Laloë and Annabel Watson for such wonderful support, advice and help when really needed!

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I could not have done this without any one of you! Thank you one and all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES / ILLUSTRATIONS

Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skilful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives. William A. Foster

Quality is not an act, it is a habit. Aristotle

Quality means doing it right when no one is looking. Henry Ford

A classic book is a book which people praise and do not read. Mark Twain

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Why did I feel that it was so it important to consider the meaning and connotations of the word *quality* with regard to the reading of 11 – 16 year olds? I believe it is important here to give a context to my thinking. The biography of the researcher will inevitably have an impact on any interpretation of current events and data in a study set within an interpretive paradigm (Carr and Kemmis, 1986); this is particularly true of my own biography. Our own experiences and values inform our present thinking and whilst the honest researcher strives for objectivity this may be easier to aspire to if the potential influences from the past on present academic thinking are made transparent (Pring, 2000). Our own schema, developing and expanding in the light of the research, have their origins in prior learning and experiences, our own cultural, social and historical background. In order to accommodate new knowledge it is helpful to appreciate our own foundations of learning. Our individually constructed schema lie within an epistemology which helps define the philosophical basis of the knowledge we have. As we create new meaning we need to be transparent about the basis of our thinking and both the cultural and theoretical perspective in which it is situated.

Thus it is important at this stage to establish my own background and my values as the researcher. Working within an interpretive paradigm I will be seeking to identify emerging themes from the data I collect through interviews and questionnaires. In order to interpret qualitative data with integrity, the researcher must at all times be transparent about their own subjective position within the research.

1.2 Personal

My own biography is significant here. I have always been a reader and indeed I interpret the world through the written word more than through the medium of sound or pictures. I understand that this is not so for most people and particularly for 11 – 16 year olds in 2013 living in a multimodal world of TV, DVD, electronic

games, electronic tablets, mobile phones and i-pods; electronic books are readily available on demand. Print is now just one way to discover information or discover the pleasure of narrative; books are perhaps more easy to come by than ever but electronic devices may hold more cachet and status for the majority of the adolescent audience who are the focus of this research (Bezemer, Kress, 2008).

My own values are rooted in a life history where books and reading were of the utmost importance in my formative years. I do remember learning to read in my head; the moment when reading became an internal process. I remember a Sunday afternoon in the glow of a real coal fire with the light outside just fading. My mother and father were both quietly reading books in our front room and I was looking at a Beatrix Potter (*Squirrel Nutkin,* I think). I was looking at the page and my lips were shaping the words as I looked at them and I whispered them quietly to myself. I wondered how my mother and father were reading in their head. It was as if it had been a moment of prayer: a wish as strong in its own way as for the miracle of sight or mobility. All at once the words were off the page and into my head of their own accord without the interventionary medium of my lips. It remains a touchstone of my childhood. It is probably the most magical thing that ever happened to me and the magic of a book in my head has never left me.

As a child books were all around me. In the early post war years of my childhood I was lucky. Downstairs was the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 24 volumes in its own bookcase bought by my father out of his first salary. The orange bookcase contained sets of the early Penguins: green, orange and yellow covers. There were dictionaries, old, old reference books, my 8 volume, blue-green hard backed, gold tooled Arthur Mee encyclopaedia (1919 edition) that had been my father's with scientific facts already supplanted through progress by the time I came to read it. My own room was a jumble of books – many of them second-hand, most of them hard backed, although Puffin books had begun to make inroads into the children's market and the inception of Peacock Books for teenagers coincided with my own adolescence – the list is endless: *I Capture the Castle, The* Family *From One End Street*; *Carbonel; Worzel Gummidge;* the *Narnia* series…. I collected books indiscriminately, seeking out sets, desiring the

magic of the story in my head. I read voraciously: after lights out at bedtime, under the covers with a torch; endless, incessant reading. I took my cardboard pocket library card on holiday and the local seaside library was my first stop before the beach.

The issue of *quality* in books is also an issue to consider in relation to my own personal values; it will inform judgements I make during the research process. My own view has never attempted to create a hierarchy of books by quality. Instead I judge and categorise books by what they give me as a reader. This has been so since childhood. There are books which provide escape and entertainment. Spufford (2003) describes this as *falling into a book* with *excited delight* (p.10). There are also books on which to cut metaphorical intellectual teeth. There are books which challenge through complexity of prose or ideas; books which are both struggle and reward to read and at the end of which there is a clear sense of personal gain. In this context I have always seen books as either *Maltesers*, pure pleasure, or carrots, harder work but ultimately of longer term benefit.

As a child my reading was never linked to the curriculum; I was unaware of the canon or the classics as separate reading goals. I graduated naturally to the Brontës at 12, reading and weeping over both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* by torchlight under the covers. It was a natural step to Jane Austen and a growing appreciation of the fineness of her prose; a judgement I reached myself by comparison with the extravagant language of the Brontës. Then Hardy: the vast landscape of Salisbury Plain in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; the horrendous hanging of the children in *Jude the Obscure* the words *"Done because we are too menny."* (p.399) remain indelible in my memory; the dying sheep and the dripping church gutter in *Far From the Madding Crowd* equally so. The quality of these books resonates for me not just in the enduring words and pictures but in a taste of the prose and a feel and smell of the text in which the magic was contained.

My father, the literary gatekeeper in my life, did not believe in censorship. He also brought me books home to read from his library in London to where he made daily commutes for work. The Bobbsey Twins. *Mary and John go to*.. so many

different countries..; Sherlock Holmes; Jeeves and Wooster; Doctor Fu Manchu – the agony of the child dying of diphtheria and the ruthless Fu Manchu's skilful removal of the membrane in the throat with a sharp incision of his knife lives in my mind to this day. Only once did my father refuse to let me read a book: the infamous *Lolita*, newly arrived in the library in 1962, and to this day I have never read it. This may be significant when I am considering the power of the gatekeeper.

I still read voraciously. My reading choices are still often determined by mood and there are many ways in which a book can encourage, motivate and inspire me. Like children, I can be resistant to the book I am urged to read; like children the book which appears on the curriculum from which I learn or teach is often the one I come to least willingly and sometimes, but not always, leave feeling refreshed and wiser. These are my own reading truths and I must remember them as I seek to make sense of a wider picture.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that I went to university to read for a degree in English Literature and there I did discover views on quality in books linked to perceptions of greatness. Though what was considered great in terms of the canon did not always move me emotionally or intellectually.

1.3 Professional

It was probably equally inevitable that I trained to become a teacher of English in secondary schools. Throughout a 25 year career as an English teacher, no matter what other curriculum initiatives and vagaries needed to be addressed, it remained important to me to encourage a reading habit in my pupils. By instinct I tried to encourage not push and to find a valid starting point for the child. It often presented me with professional challenges. Instinctively I tried to guide the child from a starting point of personal interest in a subject or an author. In my classes we shared books together: teacher to pupil; pupil to teacher; pupil to pupil.

As a former English teacher in secondary schools and, until recently, a trainer of secondary English teachers I have a considerable interest in literature, books and reading. At a personal level I have a passion for books and reading and I know from experience that reading fiction can provide both enormous pleasure and also life skills. I have always felt it a large part of my role to address both these aspects of reading through the curriculum. Nevertheless I have frequently felt at odds with curriculum requirements, particularly in relation to recommended texts and authors. My own reading of academic literature has led me to believe that we need to develop the debate about perceptions of quality in texts for young adults; about what may be called *a school canon* (Benton, 2000) and indeed the whole question of the value of imposing texts on young people rather than encouraging development of reading skills and pleasure.

In this debate it became important to me to begin any interpretation of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds by initially asking teachers and pupils their views. Whilst there are other stakeholders such as, for example, the parents, the policymakers and even the authors themselves, this study grew out of the use of *quality* as a descriptor in the NC for English in England (2008). Whilst perceptions of quality on fiction for young people to read reach beyond the curriculum, this study has its focus within a school context. The outcomes of this study may make it possible to open a wider debate on more effective ways of helping 11 – 16 year olds engage with reading and of making the literary curriculum link more dynamically with the needs of the pupils. Implicit in this is also the desire to question the need to uphold a *cultural literary heritage* (Underhill, 2002) that may not take account of recent developments in both the writing and marketing of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds; this is also an area to consider and explore.

The NC for England established expectations for 11 – 16 year olds' reading, both in practical skills and in breadth of engagement with text. This was true of the original 1998 curriculum and was again true of the NC for English (2008); it is equally true of the Draft Curriculum proposed for introduction in 2014. Recently the debate has been reignited by the Secretary of State for Education in the UK, Michael Gove, making statements about what young people should read and indeed how many books a year they should read too (2011a).

Reading for pleasure is embedded in the curriculum descriptors as are the words *books of quality* (p.4) in the NC (2008). An idiosyncratic list details authors and texts who may be considered to meet the NC expectations. Whilst the list has changed in some detail in the sixteen years separating the first and the latest curriculum manifestations, there is no clarity or theoretical basis for the manner in which suitable books were identified. Indeed, we are left with a list frozen in the time at which it was constructed which makes no allowance for new developments in text or teenage fiction genre. The limitations of this are an issue for further debate and consideration within this research project.

In this context an OFSTED (2003) report expressing concern about lack of knowledge by teachers of teenage fiction may indicate that there is a gap between what may be available in school to both motivate and inspire reading amongst the target group of this research. This becomes increasingly significant in terms of how quality may be defined. It may also impinge on parental views of quality since parents of 11 – 16 year olds are often less directly involved in what their children read and often turn to teachers for advice. This concerns how teachers respond to community expectations and how they construct advice about appropriate private reading for the young people they teach.

Part of my role as a teacher educator over the previous ten years involved supporting trainee teachers of English in developing their understanding of the range of texts available for young adults during their Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) year. This was related to the NC for English at Key Stage 3 and 4 requirements, but also involved each trainee considering the essential qualities of a text, which would help the adolescent progress in reading at a curriculum but also at a personal level. I read widely of newly published work for the 11 – 16 year old readership and I am aware of developments and changes to content, style and form. This breadth of knowledge is not necessarily shared by teachers or parents, though school librarians may well be knowledgeable here.

I am also a parent, mother of sons, and now a grandmother. When my children were young I read to them and acted as gatekeeper to their reading choices. I

encouraged them to read whatever they wanted for pleasure but I also consciously made available children's classics and often read these with the children. I now find myself instinctively following the same process with my grandchildren. As my own children reached adolescence their interest in reading waned and so did my influence on what they read. I bought books, left them lying around, chose variety and mixed what I determined as quality (the carrots I mentioned earlier) with those I regarded as appealing if less demanding (the *Maltesers*). They were rarely tempted by any books, being more interested in magazines and, in fact, only returned to reading in their 20s. Their love of narrative was fulfilled though film and television. This is a pattern and one which has been explored more fully elsewhere in studies of boys' engagement with reading (Coles and Hall, 2002; Love and Hamston, 2003). This parental experience has also given me insight into the role and influence of parents in developing and overseeing their children's reading and in parental views of quality. It is a repeating cycle with my grandchildren.

1.4 Context

1.4.1 An overview

This empirical study is situated in England within an ongoing debate about what and how children the 11 – 16 year old age range, choose to read. This itself is part of a wider debate, which looks at global trends, choices and achievements in reading (OECD, 2003). The imperatives for this debate are beliefs that reading skills and reading for pleasure are integral to the intellectual and academic progress and development of children. These beliefs are articulated and shared by teachers and parents and also by those forming educational policy. These interest groups have well-rehearsed opinions citing the value of reading habits and skills; even as early as the first millennium King Alfred's mother was encouraging her son to learn to read as a necessary skill for adult life (Asser, 893), in addition to the accomplishments of fighting and riding. Children's authors have now also entered into the debate (Blackman, 2013) and the creation of the post of the Children's Laureate in 1999 has given this group a significant voice in debates

on children's reading. Children themselves are not excluded and there has been a series of major surveys over the last 60 years (Jenkinson, 1940; Whitehead, Capey, and Maddren, 1977; Hall and Coles, 1999; and Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008) which have informed understanding of the range of children's reading and how they choose what they read.

There is a well-rehearsed assumption that children need to be exposed to books in order to learn and that the books, or literature, they read should be of *good quality*. This belief is encountered in the press, in conversation, in schools, at parents' evenings, in academic literature (Pike, 2010). It has become accepted as a fact and, indeed, the term *quality* is embedded as a requirement of reading in the NC for English (2008, p.93). However with this requirement comes a complete lack of definition of what is meant by *quality.* Not only that, but there is also an assumption implicit in the word that this ill-defined literature of *quality* will also bring with it a moral dimension: not only will it enable children to progress intellectually but also morally; they will become better future citizens through reading certain works of literature (Gove, 2011b).

1.4.2 A context for this study

Whilst the arguments cited above are applicable to all children of school age, from 5 – 16, my own professional experience is with teaching young people at secondary school in England, the 11 – 16 year old age range. In order to be clear how 11 – 16 year olds can be helped to develop skills and pleasure in reading it is necessary to identify those aspects of the literature they read which they value, but also those aspects which have the power to enable these same young people to engage with complexities beyond their immediate experience. It was evident from the outset of this research project that quality would not be simple to define; it has been a demanding and challenging task. In order to begin to clarify the shared understanding and usage of the word in relation to the reading of the chosen age range I sought the opinions of two of the stakeholders in this debate: the teachers and the 11 – 16 year old students themselves. There were clearly other stakeholders beyond this: the parents, the policy makers and the commercial

interests (publishers, booksellers) to identify just three other disparate but also highly involved parties. The pebble dropped into a puddle causes increasingly widening circles of ripples. My research began with the inner ripples but remained cognisant that there existed areas beyond my immediate remit for research which impact upon the areas I considered.

1.4.3 Commonly held assumptions about 11 – 16 year olds' reading of fiction

Within the belief that *reading is good for children* and will enhance their lives, in the broadest sense, is a tacit agreement by the adults, or gatekeepers, in the equation that, ultimately, children should be reading material that can be judged as of *good quality*. Behind this notion seems to lie the idea that there is reading material, usually fiction, which will benefit young people and reading material which will not support their intellectual and personal growth as productively. This same notion seems to relate to certain texts and similarly exclude others. This is evident in the surveys: Jenkinson (1946) is scathing in his dismissal of *bloods* (comics) whilst Whitehead (1977) is similarly dismissive of *periodicals* (his term for the magazines his survey children chose to read). Benton (2000) raises this issue in an article on the hidden *school canon* of literature. These are areas which are investigated and explored in detail in the Review of the Literature, in Chapter 2. A key element of the research was to investigate whether the belief that 11 – 16 year olds would benefit more from reading one type of fiction than another kind was rooted in findings from research evidence or what may be called popular folklore. I was interested to discover what culturally, historically and socially driven preconceptions informed thinking about quality in books.

Contrary to the views of Whitehead (1977) and Jenkinson (1946), current research points to the importance of starting where the child is (Millard, 2002; Hall and Coles, 1999) in developing skills and enthusiasm for reading. Whilst Samuel Johnson in 1791 realised the importance of getting the engagement with reading:

> *Let a boy at first read any English book which happens to engage his attention; because you have done a great deal when you have brought a boy to have entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards (p.209)*

this has not always been a popular view amongst adults concerned with promulgating the reading habit in young adults. Sarland (1991), too, makes a valuable distinction between reading and literature. He proposes that reader responses to a range of reading material can be seen to have equal validity. This will also be more fully explored in Chapter 2.

1.4.4 The curriculum context for this study

The study investigates the curriculum requirements to read fiction, the effect these have on reading patterns and preferences, but also why 11 – 16 year olds choose to read. In Chapter 2 theoretical issues relating to these choices are explored more fully. These will include the reasons why 11 – 16 year olds read for pleasure and what they choose to read. An analysis of the influences on their choice will include those whose recommendations influence 11 – 16 year olds to read: teachers, parents and peers for example. Integral to this is the question of who are the gatekeepers of children's reading choices by filtering, monitoring or censoring; this is also explored. Some of the issues identified here build on studies which have preceded work for this study.

Through time, opinion varies as to what represents suitable reading for young people and what the purpose of this reading might be. In May 2012 the UK government published a survey (Education Standards Research Team, 2012) indicating the benefits of reading for pleasure in potentially raising educational standards. This survey considered how to encourage reading for pleasure, a new thrust in government educational policy, and looked at children's perceptions of themselves as readers.

In October 2010 the Minister of Education for England, Michael Gove, added to the debate by asserting the need to include great literature in the curriculum:

> *the great tradition of our literature – Dryden, Pope, Swift, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Austen, Dickens and Hardy – should be at the heart of school life.*

resulting in the new Draft NC for English (2013) continuing to keep the focus on literature from pre 1918 (Shakespeare, a nineteenth century novel, poetry representative of the First World War) with two entries covering all drama, poetry and fiction since the First World War and *seminal world literature written in English.* In 2011 Michael Gove (2011a) also threw out the challenge that children should read 50 books a year, building on a scheme developed in the USA. There is no doubt that the debate about what children should read will continue into the future; this study aims to add theoretical background to the discussion.

The place of the reading of fiction in the school curriculum will be further considered throughout this study and will be particularly addressed in Chapter 2 in the Review of Literature and in Chapters 5 and 6 as I consider the pedagogical implications of the study in relation to the reading of 11 – 16 year olds. Illuminations of the meaning of the word *quality* in this context will help to conceptualise meaning in terms of the curriculum about text choices and progression in the classroom. At this point I return to the tension of developing reading for pleasure and developing reading for curriculum requirements.

1.4.5 Framing of this study

The focus of the research described here is defined in the title as the ***reading*** *of 11 – 16 year olds.* Although this study acknowledges the increasingly multimodal society in which we live and in which young adults operate and learn, the wider application of reading, particularly electronically, was beyond the remit of this research. Similarly the title of this dissertation contains the phrase *reading of* ***11-16 year olds***. This study considers the reading of fiction of children from 11- 16, that is young people in the secondary phase of their schooling in England. The choice of a word to describe this section of the population has its own challenges. Since the study takes into account both private and school-based reading, the subjects of the study are not simply being considered in their role as pupils. However a significant exploration in the study will be of the implication of the word *quality* in curriculum terms. Publishers categorise books for this age group as Young Adult Literature. 11 – 16 year olds are emotionally, physically and

intellectually in a process of great change; indeed the psychological implications of this will be a point of reference through the study. This process of change also affects their reading habits and reading choices.

Young adults is a term which encompasses an age boundary but also reminds us of the changes of that age. However it is also a term laden with connotations and this study will strive to both address and avoid the negativity which can be implicit in the words by referring to the population of the study as 11 – 16 year olds. By so doing I acknowledge their role as pupils, still legally obliged to be at school in the UK. However the demarcation of this age group also implicitly indicates that these are young people in a process of huge emotional, psychological and physical change. Legally, in the UK, they are children still but in other senses they are on the cusp of adulthood.

The data collection was subsequently designed to explore perceptions of quality by considering an overview of the reading choices of fiction, for use in school and for private reading too, through the eyes of both the students and the teachers. Exploring the reasons for these choices gives insight into the 11 – 16 year olds' perception of quality and also the perceptions of the teachers.

1.5 Methodology

The research reported here is an empirical study situated within an interpretive paradigm and employing mixed methods of data collection. This study builds on an earlier pilot study conducted in 2004 (Hopper, 2005; 2006), which was planned as a precursor to this research. Definitions of *quality, both* qualitative and quantitative, the latter in terms of perceived measurable criteria, were elicited through questionnaires completed by teachers and semi-structured interviews with 11 – 16 year olds and teachers in school. Some of the data from the questionnaires were quantitative; the majority of the data were qualitative through semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed thematically within the theoretical framework of Cultural and Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). The

reasons for choosing CHAT as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the data are explored in Chapter 2 and also Chapter 3.

The sample was drawn from a range of secondary schools in the South West of England. These included rural and urban schools, comprehensive and selective schools; mixed and single-sex; public and private sectors schools. Whilst this encompassed a broad spectrum of educational provision it did not, because of geographical restraints, include the potential for a complete demographic, socio-economic or ethnographic mix. However it was possible to include some socio-economic diversity through the choice of school. A sample for data analysis drawn from varied sources was important in terms of validity and reliability of the findings. This will be further described in Chapter 3.

A limitation of the study was arguably the challenge of defining a word, *quality*, with very broad connotations. It is not an academic word per se and has definite overtones of the market place. It is arguably an overused word but its appearance in relation to education means that the precise meaning of the word needs to be explored. This may be considered a strength and a weakness of the research design; it will be addressed throughout the study. The attempt to find a definition is not linked to semantics but to usage. These issues are explored more fully in Chapter 3.

1.6 Research question

The problem I began with was the use of *quality* as both a curricular and more general descriptor for appropriate reading for 11- 16 year olds. The *Aims* of the research were to identify what both students and teachers defined as quality in fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age group. I began with the research question: *What does quality mean when used with reference to reading for 11 – 16 year olds?* I reiterate this question and identify the accompanying sub-questions at the end of Chapter 2 to indicate gaps in the literature.

1.7 Outline of the dissertation

Chapter 2, Review of the Literature related to this study. Sections include a historical context of books for young people; previous surveys of the reading of 11 – 16 year olds; a review of the perceived links between literature and learning; research regarding the school canon and the place of a cultural literary heritage; some perceptions of quality; and the place of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds in the national and also related international curricula. The research questions are stated at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 3, Methodology: gives further context for the research; demonstrates specifically how the project was designed to investigate the main and sub research questions expounds the research paradigm underpinning it; and describes the methodology behind and methods used in the collection and the analysis of the data. In this chapter the justification for using CHAT as an analytical framework is explained and justified. Chapter 3 also discusses issues of ethics, reliability and validity.

Chapter 4, Findings: presents the findings arising from the research. This is framed using aspects of CHAT to explore the data fully.

Chapter 5, Discussion: presents a discussion of the findings including theoretical and pedagogical implications indicated by the study.

Chapter 6, Conclusion: draws the threads together and summarises the study indicating the limitations of the study presented here; the potential for the dissemination of the research so far; and potential further areas to develop the findings so far.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has given a background and context to the research. I have outlined my own background and beliefs and also indicated how the study reported in this thesis arises from current policy and practice. There is no doubt of the significance

of this research in relation to both practice and policy. Children's reading of fiction continues to be a concern of both popular and academic debate. Outcomes of this study are relevant to both policy makers and classroom practitioners; dissemination of the findings has the potential to enhance the development, and progression in reading of 11 – 16 year olds in curriculum terms and for pleasure. Above all this study offers a theoretical base to inform thinking about curriculum design and the development of pedagogy related to the reading of fiction of 11 - 16 year olds.

In the next chapter I shall present an overview of and critique of the extant research which has informed my thinking in relation to the theoretical background of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

I propose to begin by considering key questions and issues that surround the notion of quality in children's literature, particularly books considered appropriate for the 11 – 16 year old readership. Subsequently I will address in a critical and structured way the research themes raised in the first section and identify gaps in the research and the issues specifically addressed through this research. This study is predicated upon these developing themes and the areas of less clarity. In particular I will explore notions of *quality* literature for 11 – 16 year olds, the concept at the heart of this research.

This study is concerned with all fiction read by, chosen by and recommended for the 11 – 16 year old age range for work in school and for pleasure. In both professional and academic literature there is a range of terms used to describe such books: children's literature, teen lit, adolescent literature, young adult literature. I will be considering how the history of literature for children and young people and the terms used to describe books for this section of humankind have also been modified alongside views of childhood and, indeed, the needs of the child. This study is concerned with those books considered historically of merit by adults (the canon) and the wealth of literature specifically written for children and young people, but not necessarily deemed of literary worth by some adults. These are the carrots and *Maltesers* of the study title. There may be a distinction between what is written specifically for a reading audience of 11 – 16 and what is recommended to that same audience by the adults.

One focus in this Review of the Literature is on establishing the development of a literary genre of fiction identifiable as particularly for children and adolescents. Connections will be made to the growth of a form of literature recognised and named as teenage fiction or literature for an 11 – 16 year old readership. Within this section I will consider research over time, with particular reference to surveys of the last 60 years (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 1995). These surveys will inform the subsequent appraisal of the putative school canon noted

above. I will also look at earlier attitudes to appropriate reading material for children; including issues of the uses and purposes of story for pleasure and education. This will be considered in an educational context, where fiction may be the focus of learning or a resource to develop learning. However story as a therapeutic tool and resource will also be examined in relation to a teenage/young audience referring back to Trites' (2000) notion of the development of the individual. The history of story is relevant background to this study and is considered at more length in Appendix (1); this gives added context to the development of literature specifically designed for a pre-adult audience.

This study can only touch briefly on the growing influence of multimodal texts and electronic reading devices as a feature in both young people's reading and their development of reading habits (Millard, 2003). It is important to remain cognisant of the fact that the availability of reading material is not fixed and will never be so and that there will be trends influencing both what is read and affecting the impact of texts in differing epochs. As part of this I will also explore issues of text for enjoyment and for purposes of improvement including, personal, health and social educational purposes (PSHE).

In terms of all aspects of books written for children from 11 – 16 years of age, it is valuable to consider the background, history and development of the entire genre. At all points it is important to be aware of the influence of historical, social and cultural shifts in opinions related to the reading of young people and young adults in particular. Whilst it appears to be universally accepted by popular and academic opinion that reading is a good idea for children in terms of education, entertainment and personal growth, the changes through time in opinions about what should be read and why are also significant. I will demonstrate a constant note through the ages that reading matters for young people's emotional and intellectual development.

Thus, in seeking to explore the meaning of *quality* when applied to books suitable for an 11 – 16 year old readership, there are a number of factors to consider. In the following sections of this Review of the Literature I will explore themes, already identified, which contribute to perceived aspects of quality in literature for

this young audience. I shall begin by outlining the theoretical perspectives which inform this study; in the next section I will consider the history and the emergence of a literature specifically considered appropriate for 11 – 16 year old readers, concluding with a definition. Following this I will examine how literature may be considered to contribute to the emotional and intellectual developmental needs of the 11 – 16 year old reader. This links to the perceived purposes of literature particularly considered appropriate for this reader, which in turn links to an examination of the social and emotional issues explored in books for the 11 – 16 year old reader. This, in turn leads to a discussion of censorship and the notion of external gatekeepers. I shall explore the notion of the literary canon, the school literary canon and how the 11 – 16 year old reader fits into this. Following from notions of the school canon, I will explore how books considered appropriate for such an audience of young readers are used in the classroom. Finally I will explore definitions of quality and how these may apply to literature recommended for the reader aged from 11 – 16. I will consider both national and international contexts. I will conclude by identifying the gaps in the literature and indicating how this informs and frames the research questions.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives informing this study

2.2.1 Historical

Cole (1995) talks of the need and ability of *human beings to inhabit an environment transformed by the activity of prior members of their species* (p.190). He talks particularly of how the aspects of, for example, literacy are taken beyond the classroom. In terms of young people's reading of fiction this links to the importance placed by parents, teachers and society not just on the acquisition of the skills of reading but also of the practice of these skills in a manner deemed to be worthwhile by members of society; that is the reading of books for both pleasure and education.

This in turn links to those embedded national educational and institutional expectations that the reading of works of fiction by young people is a valuable

educational goal. Such an aim is common across many anglophone educational systems, particularly those with a colonial, imperial history such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and has been significant in a range of curricular iterations in these cultures (McLean Davies, Doecke and Mead, 2013; Prinsloo, Janks, 2013; Moumou, 2005; Green, Cormack and Patterson, 2013; Locke, 2002; Goodwyn, 2012a). This same aim is subsumed in the NC for England at Key Stages (KS) 3 and 4 in the list of recommended authors and texts and in the expectation that children up to the end of their legally required period of education should read books of *quality* (DFES, 2008). This same view is one which underlies research by Jenkins (1946) and Whitehead (1977), later developed by Hall and Coles (1999) in their survey of children's reading. The young person also has a view in this, addressed by the research reported here. The views of young people about their reading are often absent from decisions made by the adult gatekeepers (the teachers, parents, institutions, policy makers, publishers, librarians), that is those involved in all aspects of the young person's home and educational experience and particularly in relation to the provision and dissemination of books for young people.

At institutional and individual level, Hedegaard and Fleer (2008) write how a child is influenced and transformed by participating in institutional practices; this is equally true of parents who themselves have been influenced and transformed by the same societal and cultural institutional practices in their own education and who will carry the truths absorbed through this process into their own view of education; Bourdieu's (1977) *habitus*. At international level (McLean Davies et al 2013; Prinsloo, Janks, 2013; Moumou, 2005; Green, Cormack and Patterson, 2013; Locke, 2002) the debates surrounding the use of literature from the English canon and the inclusion of literature linked to indigenous populations (eg Maori, Aborigine, or the Creole speaking population of the Seychelles) give an indication of the cultural power of literature. There are also links to Lave and Wenger (1991) where communities of practice support and propagate ways of behaving and knowing; where common assumptions are accepted by the community. The community of teachers and how they respond to demands from the narrow and the broader community is significant here (McLean Davies et al, 2013: Goodwyn, 2012a) as teachers respond to increasingly complex and conflicting demands

Kamal-Richards, 2008; Goodwyn, 2012a; Westbrook, 2013). However my research is framed particularly by CHAT and the way educational development is located within a sociocultural context which influences and is influenced by participants and the institutions of which they are part.

Whilst the existence of a NC in England is relatively new (1988), key elements of the NC for English at KS 3 and 4 have their roots in views expressed in earlier centuries. I shall consider the influence of these early exponents of literacy, for example John Locke in the late seventeenth century and Jane Johnson in the eighteenth century, later in this chapter. Societal expectations for children's attainment and progress in reading move slowly and rely heavily on shared social views which are supported at institution and curriculum level. We see this in the way that electronic and graphic texts have been slow to become embedded as accepted modes of developing reading at curriculum and institutional level; *the constipated, book bound modes of the standard curriculum* (Millard, 2003, p.4). It is equally apparent in the slow movement to include indigenous literature in international curricula for English in anglophone countries, such as New Zealand, Australia and South Africa (McLean Davies et al, 2013; Prinsloo, Janks, 2013; Cormack and Patterson, 2013; Locke, 2002).

2.2.2 Sociocultural

Sociocultural theory is concerned with the relationship between the development of the individual and the influence of social, cultural and historical factors on that same individual's development. The ideas relating to sociocultural theory began with Vygotsky (1978) and were further developed by Leontev (1978) and Engeström (1987)

The historical and cultural background is important in this study; however it is also heavily influenced by theories of socially constructed learning. There is an interdependence between the impacts of these two aspects of sociocultural theory on this research. For Vygotsky (1978) an essential element is the role culture and language play in development. Vygotsky is seen as considering *the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes* (Wertsch, 1991).

From this comes the idea that everything is mediated through cultural processes. This is of considerable significance in considering the research reported here, where, as stated in the preceding section, views of the significance of children's reading are strongly embedded in a societal view and expectation. This is manifested in particular in the notion of a shared knowledge and understanding and thus practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

2.2.2.1 Activity Theory

The broad framework of Activity Theory is an aspect of sociocultural theory and arose initially from the work of Vygotsky (1978). In essence it represents a conceptual movement from a psychoanalytical approach to understanding the development of human behaviour, to one considering the interplay between the subject and object, based on mediation through the use of artefacts. Whilst the normal interpretation for an artefact might be a tool, for Vygotsky the mediating tools included language and symbols (John-Steiner and Mahn, 2011). This led to the concept that learning was a shared and mediated process and that cooperation with others externally could lead to the internalisation of the processes. This also links to the notion of situated learning from others in a community (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and to Bourdieu's (1977) ideas of habitus where social and community practices are jointly constructed.

Leontev (1978) and Engeström (1987, 1990) built on Vygotsky's initial concepts including developing aspects of Activity Theory. Matters (including pedagogy) are seen to develop once more through societal need; this is equally true of adults' and children's understandings about what is expected and will be absorbed *by repetition and observation* Lave and Wenger (1991).

Vygotsky saw human interaction as a mediation between human action, the tools (which might be actual or conceptual tools), and the object of the activity. This was essentially a three part approach represented by a simple triangle of Subject, Tools and Object. Leont'ev (1978) developed this giving an object orientated and with a new emphasis on the division of labour, the collective enterprise approach.

2.2.2.2 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Further developments, leading to CHAT, came from Engeström (2000). He saw *object-orientated activity* (Edwards, 2010) as key and he also considered that looking at joint, not individual, activity was crucial. He does not see activity as simple but rather *characterized by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation and potential for change* (Edwards, 2010, p.159). Engeström posited that any activity needs to be considered in a historical context as well as a social and cultural context. Nardi also (1996) noted that Activity *theory is a powerful and clarifying descriptive tool rather than a strongly predictive theory.* (p.8). Twiselton (2004) has demonstrated the power of Activity Theory in illuminating aspects of classroom performance in order to provide opportunities to analyse specific approaches and actions.

Heddegard (2009) and Fleer and Heddegard (2010) demonstrate a further development of CHAT. Whilst they are concerned with using a cultural historical model in relation to exploring child development, the three areas of relevance that they cite:

> *society's perspective with traditions that implies values, norms, and discourses about child development; (b) different institutions' perspectives that include different practices; and (c) children's perspectives that include their engagements and motivations.* (p.65)

relate to all school practices. This is particularly true in terms of the *traditions, values and norms* which a society may have and of the different practices extant in any society. Fisher (2006, p.5) also summarises this approach as: *classroom activity cannot be studied in isolation from the cultural historical situation that created it*. Examining practices through CHAT allows context, tradition and jointly constructed activity to be seen as part of the movement towards achieving an object. This is another way of making some sense of Engeström's *ambiguity* of any activity.

Literacy is now deeply embedded in Western society as a societal prerequisite and the reading of approved (quality?) fiction has become an accepted manifestation of this societal prerequisite that may be measured, often through the school curriculum or examination system.

Under the umbrella of sociocultural theory, it is therefore possible to theorise about how choices are made at national curriculum and institution level in relation to what constitutes an appropriate body of quality fiction for young people to read. The links between sociocultural theory and Activity Theory make CHAT an appropriate framework in which to place this study.

Through the theoretical framework of CHAT it is possible to explore the societal views of the purpose for the reading of fiction. This will extend beyond the function of reading fiction as a tool for sustaining and consolidating literacy skills; it will link to issues of emotional development and the young person's understanding of the nature of the society within which it finds itself at both macro (institution and the outside world) and micro level (the family, peers). It also enables specific examination of practice and the particular effect of a range of factors linked to CHAT on teachers and the students they teach.

2.2.3 Literary theory

Literary theory is not a significant theoretical perspective underpinning this research. I am not concerned here with the development of styles and modes of fiction for young people, although these will be alluded to in considering judgements of quality; nor are broader literary theories central to this research. Rather this research is concerned with the pedagogy and the social and cultural imperatives informing reading choices. However in considering how a child's developmental needs may be met through their reading it is important to remain cognisant of literary movements (such as Literary Heritage, Personal Growth, Reader Response, Marxism, Feminism) which may also impact on fiction written for young people at a particular time and on how fiction may be considered in a classroom context (Goodwyn, 2012a).

Nevertheless, judgements of quality may be linked at institutional level and certainly at national level to perceptions of worth which are informed by developing concepts of literary theory. Such judgements may become internalised in institutional thinking, which in itself relates to theories of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977). However it is the underlying pedagogy arising from literary theory which will remain in the forefront of this research.

2.3 The history of literature for the reader in the 11 – 16 year old age group

The development of a genre of literature aimed specifically at an 11 – 16 year old audience is inextricably bound up in social history. Just as the movement from an oral tradition to the development of works of fiction for adult readers is linked to interwoven historical strands of the development of mass printing (Appendix 1) and a spreading of literacy competence, so is the development of a sub-genre of literature aimed at a specific young audience equally bound in the same historical and educational movements. Whilst it is important to be mindful of the significance of historical movements in this respect, a detailed examination of these trends is beyond the remit of this dissertation. Thus I propose to summarise earlier influences on the development of literature for young people and focus more closely on the last 60 years, in itself my own lifetime! Appendix (1) gives further detail on the importance of story in any society and touches on how closely it has been linked with teaching, recording and informing. Books are an extension of the original oral tradition of telling stories. I will be returning to the notion of gatekeepers (those who produce, disseminate and monitor/censor fiction for young people) later in this section, but the gatekeepers of books for children will feature here too.

2.3.1 Early history

In his *Life of King Alfred,* Asser (893) refers to King Alfred's mother, Osburga, offering an illuminated book of poetry to the first of her sons who learned to read and Alfred's pleasure in receiving the book once he could read. This was not a book specifically for children, though no doubt the illuminations would form part

of the attraction. There is no doubt that this early biography had propaganda elements: showing a king as well bred, accomplished, noble and, unusually for the time educated. However this linking of books for children and an educational purpose is a common theme, a constant through history (Styles and Arzipe, 2009).

Kline (2003) draws parallels between modern literature for children and that written in medieval times in that both explore concerns of the time and that both strive to teach *social norms and positive values* (p.3). Kline (2003) writes of medieval texts helping children to understand and develop in the culture of the time, just as Trites (2000) sees the modern novel for the 11 – 16 year old reader as one of personal development. Kline (2003) also notes the problems in clearly defining what children's literature is: themes to be returned to in later sections on both quality and the school canon.

Books for children from medieval times to the early twentieth century are a generic corpus with no distinction made for the upper, teenage, years of childhood, although with distinct different gender distinctions in the target audience for what is written. By the seventeenth and eighteenth century it is again women who appear to take the lead in providing books for children. Watson (2009) and Orestano in Styles and Arzipe (2009) describes how in the 1740s Jane Johnson produced meticulous cards and stories to help her children learn to read and in so doing how she was selective about the content, using religious texts but sometimes changing or altering words to improve the appeal to the child or make a moral message more explicit. This links the two areas of pleasure and moral improvement in reading material to which we return.

2.3.2 Eighteenth and nineteenth century

Jane Johnson's texts were written for her own children but, in a similar epoch, Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Macaulay and Sarah Trimmer were also producing books and stories for children, explicitly to educate and entertain. Whilst Trimmer saw learning to read as a means to access the moral content of the Bible, conversely, Macaulay saw books as appropriate purely for amusement

only after the age of ten (Orestano, 2009) and she expresses concern over the dubious lessons that may be learned from the reading of novels. Trimmer's desire to influence the development of children's literature is evident in the publication *The Guardian of Education* (1802 – 1806), in which she critiqued publications for children and even produced criteria to describe them. More also rails against the potential dangers of light reading, including *idleness, vanity and indolence* (cited in Orestano, 2009) as possible results of such indulgence. The educational principles expressed by Locke and Rousseau were largely influential on attitudes to books for children at this period, adults acting as gatekeepers again. Locke (1693), particularly recommended the use of Fables as literature for young children and advised against using the Bible as reading matter for a young audience; Rousseau *largely proscribed childhood reading* (Bottoms, 2006). These adults felt that the reading of children needed mediation; a view not unlike that of the adult gatekeepers now.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century fairy-tales were re-presented for an audience deemed more sensitive and not equipped emotionally to deal with the violence or even bawdiness of earlier versions of these tales. In translations of Perrault's versions of fairy tales such as *Red Riding Hood*, there is a clear moral message but the violence of Grimms' versions has been toned down. In Perrault's version of the tale Red Riding Hood's goodness and passivity are rewarded and she is saved; in Grimm she is eaten up for being trusting of strangers. In an even earlier version, much earthier in tone, the young girl escapes the wolf's bed and unwelcome advances by a subterfuge which leaves the aggressor looking foolish and the young girl the victor in this struggle between good and evil. Sarah Trimmer was suspicious of stories that were not rooted in everyday reality. She worried about books which might *excite an unregulated sensibility* in the child and which lacked the moral purpose which might improve the child. That Trimmer saw fairy tales as supporting superstition and that she queried the values they represented, is an arguably modern view.

Bottoms (2006) writes illuminatingly about a debate in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century between those she terms *romantics*, including Lamb and Coleridge, and those she calls *educationists*, like Trimmer, more concerned with

the moral welfare and development of children. The debate is about which literature is more suitable for the development of the child's mind: the growth of imagination which might arise from reading Fairy Stories or a moral and factual diet which would serve to improve the growing mind. Aspects of this debate continue, re-enacted by current policy makers and gatekeepers as the purpose of literature in the curriculum is reconsidered (Cliff Hodges, 2010a; Goodwyn, 2012a). Echoes of current concern are also heard in Coleridge's assertion, cited in Bottoms (2006):

> *Coleridge claimed that few questions were 'oftener or more anxiously asked by parents, than – what are the best books for children?' (p.212)*

We can infer that a view of quality in literature for children at this point is bifurcated: seen by some in the underlying moral lessons in the text in addition to a narrative which will not disturb the intended audience; by others as a freeing up of the imaginative impulse. Leeson (1985) cites Alexander Strahan in 1875 offering advice on how literature for 11 – 16 year old readers should be constructed: *perfectly pure and modest…but it must be gay and fresh (p.90).* On the other hand Watkins (1999) posits the idea of children *wiser than adults (p.33)* in children's literature of the late nineteenth century, a view arising from Rousseau and the Romantic view of childhood. Leeson (1985) judges the years from 1870 – 1908 as *a rich period in Children's' fiction* (p.110).

2.3.3 Twentieth century

As we move into the twentieth century there is a growth in books for young readers beyond explicitly moralising texts. Actual printed books are accompanied by comic papers, specifically for a young audience, demonstrating the growing significance of this group of readers and consumers. However, at this point, there is a distinct gender divide in the kinds of stories: adventure and derring-do for boys and stories of home and family for girls. Stories of Empire and school are common at this point (Leeson, 1985). Interesting that the robust stories and language of the tales of Empire were fully approved of by the adult gatekeepers of the era but are censored now for the racist and gendered attitudes they embody; a theme we will return to later in this chapter. What is considered quality is often deeply entwined in social and cultural issues of the time. This is

particularly evident in recent debates in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa about what literature is appropriate in the curriculum for English in these countries which will be inclusive of the indigenous population hitherto culturally excluded by previous imperialistic curriculum iterations (McLean Davies et al, 2013; Prinsloo, Janks, 2013; Cormack and Patterson, 2013; Locke, 2002).

An acknowledgement of the importance of books for children is noted in the establishment of the Association of Children's Librarians in 1937. Yet this, as above, also embeds the idea of the adult gatekeepers even more officially as a force overseeing the books deemed appropriate and suitable for a young audience. By this point there was a resurgence of academic interest in books for children, resonating with that in an earlier epoch and in response to a growing market of books targeted at young people. The quality debate is even implicitly reflected in the fact that Eleanor Graham excluded Blyton from the original Puffin list from the1940s.

In the 1940s, too, Jenkinson (1946) undertook the first survey of children's reading, the first large scale study to inform this research. Over the next 60 years surveys by Whitehead (1977), Benton (1995), Hall and Coles (1999), Clark and Foster (2008) looked in detail at what children read. Texts popular with children are of the time; there is little overlap between popular texts in the surveys; and, so called classic texts do not predominate the lists. Popular authors are also contemporary to the surveys with, again, very little overlap.

2.4 UK Government reports on children's reading of literature

By the early twentieth century, appropriate literature for children to read as part of the education process had become an issue for politicians. There have been four key UK government enquiries into the teaching of English since 1921 (Newbolt, 1921; Bullock, 1975; Kingman, 1988; and Cox, 1989). The Kingman report was primarily concerned with the teaching of language but nevertheless considers the place of literature as a model for developing writing. The other three reports all concur, with remarkably little change, on the significant place of

literature in the curriculum as a means of developing not just the intellect but also emotional and empathy skills:

> *An active involvement with literature enables pupils to share the experience of others. They will encounter and come to understand a wide range of feelings and relationships by entering vicariously the worlds of others, and in consequence they are likely to understand more of themselves. (Cox, 1989, p.94)*

Whilst acknowledging the importance of providing both a range of heritage and modern, contemporary literature including fiction written specifically for the *young adult* (Cox, 1989) readership, they do not provide clear criteria for identifying fiction of quality; rather they leave it to the experience and even intuition of the teacher. Cox opposed the use of prescribed lists of authors (Benton, 2000).

2.5 Surveys of children's reading habits

The surveys of the reading habits of 11 – 16 year olds are in many ways the backbone of this research in terms of the evidence from the children interviewed but also how the data from surveys have been interpreted and, in some cases, informed government policy. They are similar, though not identical, in conception and give a chronological insight into how fiction for children has been both viewed by teachers and young people and how these views have been interpreted by researchers over time. There are also links between research from an earlier time and policy development; for example in the influence of Whitehead's (1975) research on the Bullock Report (1975). I argue that this is not currently the case and that current policy development appears remote from recent research into the place and purpose of literature, particularly fiction, in and out of the classroom (Goodwyn, 2012a; Cliff Hodges, 2010a).

As Newbolt, Kingman, Bullock and Cox looked at adult perceptions of what children should read as part of their education so, too, did an interest develop in what children themselves were reading and how they perceived themselves as readers. The first of these surveys, as I mentioned above, was by Jenkinson in 1940 who actually divided his research, findings and recommendations very clearly by gender. Whilst Jenkinson (1946) did express concern over children's

reading of inferior literature and the comics he refers to as *bloods*, many of his views such as the need for teachers to know what their pupils read; the use of texts in the classroom; using small sets of texts with groups in a class; and ways of stimulating an interest in literature, are remarkably close to modern views. It is significant *that* one recommendation from Jenkinson's survey is that the teacher asks himself (sic) about any classroom text:

> *Do they like it? Does it make any impact; excite interest? (p.157)*

He also strongly advocated the encouragement of private reading alongside the study of set texts recommending a control over this from the teacher that would be:

> *..firm but not rigid, broadminded and tolerant, but vigorous and purposeful. (p.163)*

And he thought that novels should have more attention in school than other forms of literature since they represented accessible and populist forms of reading. Jenkinson was very aware of the need to start at the child's point of interest; very much in line with findings from Hall and Coles (1999) nearly 60 years later. However, harking back to a much earlier era, these recommendations are for boys. He considered the study of literature for girls from 12+ - 15+ as *unsuitable* and *of little value to them* (p.283). His views on girls' reading are as dated as his views on boys' reading are contemporary and a very clear indication of historical, social and cultural influence.

In 1971 Whitehead (1977) researched into the reading habits of young people; this informed much of the Bullock Report (1975) into reading in the curriculum. It was an extensive survey and included the most popular books read at the time. A fundamental aspect of Whitehead's exploration of the findings was the classification of the titles reported as being read by children. His final step was to divide narrative qualities *into 'quality' and 'non-quality'* (p.111) and his definition of quality is significant:

> *..on the one hand those whose production has been essentially of a commercial operation, a matter of catering for a market; and on the other hand those in which the involvement of the writer with his subject matter and his audience has been to generate a texture of imaginative experience which rises beyond the merely routine and derivative.* (p.111 - 112)

Whilst defending this categorisation he is, however, concerned by the subjective nature of the assigning of books to certain criteria. One recommendation from Whitehead's survey concerns the need for teachers to become knowledgeable about books available for children to read; he also notes how difficult it is for practising teachers to find time to do this. This latter point is recurrent both in the research literature (OFSTED, 2003) but also as a theme reported in this study.

What is significant is how his list of books read, in common with Jenkinson's (1946) earlier findings, are of the time in which the surveys were compiled. This time dependence on book popularity is again shown in Benton's (1996) and Hall and Coles' (1999) research, both of which again examined patterns in reading, and, indeed, in my own earlier research into patterns of reading amongst secondary pupils in the South West of England in 2002 (Hopper, 2005; 2006). There are no consistencies between the lists. All the surveys note that older children (11 years old and upward) read less for pleasure than younger children. The disparity between the reading of boys and the reading of girls is a common theme between all the surveys with boys consistently showing less interest both in reading and in fiction texts.

Both the government reports and the surveys on children's reading over time indicate that the keen interest into what children read and the impact this reading may have on them has continued unabated from early times to the current day. Adults are interested in what children read and, whilst children's opinions have been canvassed, it remains the adults who make the key decisions about what is suitable for children to read at home and particularly in an educational context. It was a desire to give the young people a current voice in this debate which contributed to the second research sub-question in this project, namely a question regarding the young people's view of what constituted quality in their

reading. There has been little attention paid to how text is used in the classroom (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977). In the next section I will explore the adult overview of children's and young people's reading in terms of the adult gatekeepers.

2.6 Gatekeepers

> *Perhaps the greatest paradox for any young person's novelist is that first you have to please the adults. It's the parents, librarians and teachers who are the gate-keepers, and only when they are happy can you approach your target audience.* (Gray, 2004)

> *when it comes to choosing what children should read, do adults really know best?* (Armistead, (2003)

I have already established that the adults are, and have been, inextricably bound up with all aspects of children's literature, maintaining a firm control over the content and dissemination of fiction for children and adolescents. The influence of the gatekeeper is significant. In this section I aim to establish from where come the ideas of quality about the reading of 11- 16 year olds and how these opinions are manifested.

Sarland (1991) notes that there is an imbalance of power between the 11 – 16 year old readers and the adults involved at all stages in the production and distribution of this genre of literature. This was true in previous eras and continues to be true now. Indeed Tucker (1981) cites Plato in *The Republic* as exhorting the guardians (mothers and nurses) to tell only *authorised tales* in order to mould young minds. Even now the gatekeepers amend works of fiction written in an earlier epoch in order to make it more appropriate for readers of a new generation. A case in point is Enid Blyton, often viewed with opprobrium by adults for, for example, anti-feminist and racist attitudes. Three years ago it was reported that ten of Blyton's Famous Five novels were being rewritten to remove dated vocabulary and names (Flood, 2010), although plots remain unchanged. Arguably the same approach to difficult vocabulary is now being taken with the

works of writers for an adult audience from previous generations, such as Dickens, or indeed for children's authors such as Nesbitt.

Zipes (2002) writes about the importance of young people and adults sharing books and adults helping young people to understand linguistic codes for discrimination, enjoyment and personal growth. He relates this to his own struggle to reconcile his view of the Sweet Valley Twins series as trash alongside his own daughter's pleasure in these books. He is categorical that children's literature is produced primarily by and for adults (p.63), a view supported by Appleyard (1991) who also writes that we need to be aware that children's books are written by adults. Zipes (2002) notes that: children's opinions are not taken into consideration when adults are evaluating children's fiction. He considers that adults *attribute an absolute value* (p.63) when critiquing children's fiction; an absolute value relating to *universal moral and ethical truths* (ibid) yet one which has no recognised, agreed criteria.

Critics in the field of children's literature are concerned with ideologies that are behind the books. Appleyard (1991) notes that *children's books are written by adults whose values are transmitted in them* (p.84). Writing about current issues of perceptions of appropriate literature for young people in Australia, McLean Davies et al (2013) note that schooling is *structured hierarchically, with adults adopting a position of surveillance vis-à-vis young people in their care (p.231)*. Such a comment, written very recently, indicates that the problem of adults overseeing literature is not simply historical, nor limited to the UK.

Whilst the adult overview may seem axiomatic in the context of YA fiction it can also be the elephant in the room, the known but unsaid. The ambitions of Sarah Trimmer and Jane Johnson to improve the minds of their readers through the reading material provided, continues to the present day. Some authors (for example Wilson, Burgess, Blume, Hornby et al) are explicit about this in interviews and written testimony. However this is not always the case. Eccleshare (1996) sees the YA novels as the *most narcissistic* of genres as she traces the development of YA literature; yet she also notes how authors have a didactic approach be it to gay sex, early sexual experience or simply first love. Here the

authors take a particular moral stance. This then begs the question of what or whose values may be encouraged when texts are recommended: the author's values or the recommending adult's values? McLean Davies et al (2013), linking to Bourdieu (1996), forcefully situate this problem of the adult values being put forward in choices of literature for young people as a power struggle. They see the promotion of certain works of literature as a global, not merely national problem, and one in which social groups compete for hierarchy and power through cultural capital This has particular significance in the school context where, as we have already established, the young people are relatively powerless.

Whether young readers will infer the 'correct' message from any text is also not certain. Narvaez (2002) carried out research to investigate how completely children understood the explicit moral message in the texts they were given. She concludes from this research that young readers will not necessarily draw the same messages from any given text as adults believe they will and that the moral engagement and understanding is dependent on their own development and background. This means that there can be no universal predictability of the impact a text will have on groups of young people or individuals. This requires a reassessment of the role of the gatekeeper.

McLean Davies et al (2013) refer specifically to Australia but they make a point relevant to the role of the gatekeeper in all classrooms where English literature is studied. They are explicit about this when they refer to: *the meaning of a literary work as the unstable product of the situation in which it is read and appropriated* (p230). Miller (2003) makes a similar point, this time specifically linked to classroom practice, when she notes that *teachers insist on their own 'correct textual interpretations'* which *cuts students off from their own responses* (p.289), a point echoed by Goodwyn (2012a). Any message will also be socially, culturally and historically dependent.

In the quotations which open this section, Gray (2004) refers to the paradox that an author of literature for YAs needs to satisfy the gatekeepers (the parents, teachers, publishers and librarians) in order to get a work into the domain of young

readers, he uses emotive language to describe how these adults will *bar entry* to texts viewed as unsuitable, even by virtue of a provocative book cover. But what are the aspirations and expectations of these gatekeepers? How do they distinguish between content (narrative, language) and thematic content? The cultural values, pedagogical potential and the possibility of excluding social groups are not necessarily explicit in the making of judgements.

Parents are a particularly influential branch of gatekeepers. Tucker (1981), admittedly thirty years ago, writes of parents wishing to choose books cautiously for YAs and looking for texts which affirm, or are not too far removed from, what are perceived as *conventional, contemporary attitudes* (p.192). He claims that parents turn their strong disapproval on any of the other institutions who provide their children with materials considered inappropriate. In the media, in support of this, a storm of protest was raised over the use of *The Simpsons* cartoon as a media text in English lessons (Clark, 2010). The parental arguments rehearsed were that such a text was dumbing down and wasted valuable time which should be spent on the classics. This same argument is one frequently used in relation to school texts parents see as unsuitable. Equally parents with, for example, strong religious convictions will protest against certain texts: *Abomination* by Robert Swindells is one; the *Harry Potter* series another amongst many (Zipes, 2002). Hansard (1999) records a debate in the House of Lords where the parental outcry to ILEA's publication of *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin*, a very early book on gay parenting, is discussed in relation to Clause 28.

Noll (1994) and Agee (1999) have both researched the effects of potential parental censorship in the USA on choices of texts for the classroom. Their interviews with teachers reveal widespread reluctance to engage with texts which may be challenging in terms of parental approval. The challenges teachers considered were sexual but also racial, violence related and religious. The concerns over texts included novels such as *Catcher in the Rye*, *Grapes of Wrath* and *Chocolate Wars* as well as plays by Shakespeare. It was reported that teachers had been suspended as a result of parental reactions to texts that had been taught in class and that, within institutions, other teachers or administrative staff could be equally censorious towards novels considered unsuitable on moral, religious or other

grounds. This was seen to lead to very conservative choices of texts to use in class unless other teachers, departments and school managers actively supported a broader and more adventurous range of literary text use in school.

On the other hand Wilkinson (2003) showed in her research that parents of pre-school children were more likely to respond to the child's own preferences. The parents in Wilkinson's study were aware of classics and recommended books but nevertheless started with where the child was (Hall and Coles, 1999). The anxiety from parents about what their children read is shown to increase as the child moves towards adolescence and is often exacerbated by the concern about getting boys of this age to read where there is a gender imbalance in reading interest (Whitehead, 1977; Hall and Coles, 1999; Millard, 1997; Love and Hamston, 2000, 2003).

The parental gatekeepers may be conservative in their choices of texts (Zipes, 2002) and hark back to fiction with which they may be familiar; this, in itself, relates to Bourdieu and the creation of cultural capital with reference to the perceived worth of children's literature (Zipes, 2002; Rex, 2002). In parental terms this means wanting the books their children read at school and at home to influence them positively in intellectual and academic terms. Zipes (2002) states that:

> *parents have always wanted the best for their children and sought to control them at the same time* (p.79)

This is certainly true of the books they wish their children to read. There is also a gender imbalance noted in the parental input into children's reading. Mothers are seen to show more interest and make greater attempts to influence choices (Hopper, 2005; Zipes, 2002). However male members of the family, whilst reportedly being less involved, have the most influence on the reading choices of young people (NLT, 2011; Love and Hamston, 2003).

Noll (1994) and Agee's (1999) research, whilst based on situations in the USA where there are some different cultural nuances in some states, for example, prevalent fundamental Christianity, is transferable in its essence to the UK. Teachers globally are in a challenging situation when it comes to choosing or recommending texts for YAs' class or private reading. They are also answerable

to a number of gatekeepers: the institution for which they work, which in itself may have restrictions such as faith; the parents, bringing with them the concerns we have already delineated, and potentially able to censor the teachers' practice; and the imperatives of the NC and Examination Board requirements. Teachers are also bounded by legal requirements and these relate to their duties in respect of the students for whom they act in loco parentis.

2.6.1 The Curriculum as gatekeeper

At both Key Stage 3 and 4 teachers of English in England are required to teach literature and to teach texts which will support aspects of pupils' academic development. Literature is explicitly mentioned at KS3 in:

> ***Cultural understanding:*** *Through English, pupils learn about the great traditions of English literature and about how modern writers see the world today. Through the study of language and literature, pupils compare texts from different cultures and traditions. They develop understanding of continuity and contrast, and gain an appreciation of the linguistic heritages that contribute to the richness of spoken and written language. Comparing texts helps pupils to explore ideas of cultural excellence and allows them to engage with new ways in which culture develops. This also enables them to explore the culture of their society, the groups in which they participate and questions of local and national identity, for example by exploring regional and global variations in the way English is spoken.* (2008, p.63)

Whose culture is not made explicit and whilst the admonition to place literature in the context of the local and national identity indicates a broader social view, nevertheless it is unclear what *cultural excellence* may mean; neither is the inference of *ways in which culture may develop* explained in more detail. It appears as though the teacher may make a judgement on this, however there is also institutional constraint ranging from internal interpretations of the curriculum, through statements of ethos, to budgetary restriction on the provision. *Alia sunt tempora, alia mores*: cultural expectations change across time and, as I demonstrated earlier, these are also reflected in curriculum imperatives.

In international anglophone curricula which include English Literature, the role of the gatekeeper is even more complex. It is only recently that the cultural and social implications of an English Literature syllabus in multicultural, multilingual

countries have been put under the spotlight (Dreher, 2003; Prinsloo, Janks, 2002; Locke, 2008; Paterson, 2008; Moumou, 2005; Macken-Horarik, Morgan, 2008; Lovell, 2004). It is a significant issue begging questions of historical colonial and imperial control and disempowerment of those not originally linked to an anglophone power structure; these are the *outsiders* in a *struggle for cultural capital* (p.229) referred to by McLean Davies et al (2013). Yandell (2008), Turvey and Yandell (2011) and Shah (2013) give pertinent reminders, important as curriculum iterations are under the spotlight in England, that the multicultural classroom is also a feature of classrooms in England and that the same *struggle for cultural capital* is being enacted here too. Whilst this debate in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia (Prinsloo, Janks, 2002; Locke, 2008; Paterson, 2008; by McLean Davies et al, 2013) has given rise to curricula which are broader based and less rooted in traditional, imperialist or colonial thinking about literature, this has not happened in new curriculum iterations in England. For example, currently the emphasis in the New Zealand Curriculum for English (2007) is on literature which will be inclusive for the Maori and Pasifika students in school. This is related to current cultural, social and historical concerns within New Zealand society. A similar pattern can be seen in new curriculum developments in Australia (ACARA, 2011). However, as Turvey and Yandell (2011) note, in England multicultural literature appears to have been marginalised into a mainly examination syllabus requirement and based nearly entirely on multicultural poetry.

In the KS3 NC for England, texts which may have *influenced culture and thinking* are explained as:

> *texts that are widely known, referred to and quoted, and have become part of the cultural fabric of society through their language and the way in which they present ideas, themes and issues.* (p.68)

However, the meaning of *the cultural fabric of society* is less easy to identify in a diverse and multicultural nation, when injunctions such as these emanate from the policy-makers. On p.71 of the KS3 NC for English in England authors are suggested who represent the soi-disant literary heritage and another tranche of names considered appropriate for KS3 readers (11 – 14 years old). There is a preponderance of what have been termed *dead, white* (p.153) male authors

(Turvey and Yandell, 2011). This idea originated with Knox (1983) and, although somewhat derogatory, is nevertheless an essentially true summary of the coverage of the recommendations. There is no explanation of whence the literary heritage has come, nor of the pedagogic origin of the lists of suggested authors. In terms of the latter list, the authors of books for young people will not change for several years, thus not being responsive to new authors or movements. It is noteworthy that in both the KS3 and the KS4 NC for English, the author's craft is explained in terms of linguistic use: sentence length, passive and active voice, modal verbs… Any discussion of why these features take precedence over other aspects of author's craft such as ability to construct a strong narrative, characterisation, dialogue, for example, is absent.

Teachers may also, in the institutional context, be expected to use fiction to explore PSHE issues as part of a cross-curricular programme linked to the Big Picture (2010) in the UK. This may include using issues-based texts to explore aspects of *Every Child Matters (ECM).* This cross-curricular linking is also an expectation in the USA (Agee, 1999) and in NZ there is an understanding that fiction can be used in the classroom as a cultural reference (Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI), 2009). It is unclear how aspects of literary heritage or recommended authors apply to this aspect of text use.

It is also important to note that publishers and librarians are also key gatekeepers of the reading of young people.

2.6.2 Publishers as gatekeepers

Publishers have recognised the growth in the market for books for children and adolescents. Zipes (2002) considers that the publishing of children's books has become a big business in which publishers and writers look to fill perceived gaps in the market. Zipes positions the production of children's books as an industry which aims to make money and which involves strata of people beyond the writer and the child audience; he refers to the marketplace surrounding children's books. He cites, for example, the designer, the literary agent and the distributor as all being party to what will eventually reach the shelves. Publicity is also important

and can be crucial in determining what books reach the young reader. Publicity, Zipes notes, is dependent on reviews, fame of the author and access to platforms such as the internet.

Rosen expresses his view of the publishers' attitude in strong terms:

> t*he democracy of the market place. 'If the kids don't wanna read your book, then why should I publish it? I'm not a charity. You write something they wanna buy and I'll sell it for you...'* (Rosen, 2005).

It is notable that is it rare for the child to be consulted before a book is published although, as with Harry Potter and the Sweet Twins and Point Horror series (Zipes, 2002; Appleyard, 1991) a book found to be successful in the market place may well spawn further books in the series or similar narratives.

2.6.3 Librarians as gatekeepers

The gatekeepers are demonstrably a significant influence on the production and dissemination of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds; both Jenkinson (1946) and Whitehead (1977) refer to the importance of school libraries in supporting the development of reading habits. Westbrook (2013) sees the value of the school library as a calm space where children can read without interruption, however she also notes the problem some teachers now have with the potentially unstructured nature of library lessons in a busy curriculum where results are more important than encouraging pleasure in reading.

Benton (1995b), concurring with Sarland (1994) notes the problem extant where librarians will not necessarily stock books which children enjoy and have been shown to respond to these same texts in sophisticated critical terms. (Zipes, 2001; Sarland, 1994; Gaiman, 2013) I refer again to the Point Horror series which was appreciated by children but were deplored by adults as unsuitable and not stocked by some school libraries (Appleyard, 1991).

2.6.4 Summary

What emerges from a view of books for young people over a millennium is both a strong sense of an educational imperative and, in embracing that, a sense of adults controlling content and purpose. Narrative themes, characters and structures also change and develop in line with changing social and historical imperatives. I further develop these themes in later sections of this chapter.

The research literature indicates that gatekeepers have a demonstrable role in all aspects of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds from the writing of it, to the buying of it, to the recommending of it for curriculum use and for reading for pleasure. What is not clear, however, is the significance of the gatekeepers on what schoolchildren are expected to read or are recommended to read. The role of gatekeeper is undertaken by many of those involved in the sub-section of community in the CHAT framework for analysis (Section 4.5.2); these gatekeepers are often not the actual classroom teachers. The voices of the teachers are also noticeably absent, a point noted by Goodwyn (2002, 2008, 2012a, b). This contributed to the first of the research sub-questions, that is, the investigation of teachers' views of quality.

The power of the gatekeepers over what 11 – 16 year olds read for pleasure and for curriculum purposes is deeply entrenched in society, institutionally and particularly in the curriculum. I have illustrated that this is also an international issue; Goodwyn (2012a) roots this firmly in an imperialistic past. Gatekeepers seem to require to protect children from a range of perceived dangerous influences of literature whilst using it to propagate values rooted in historical perceptions of cultural value and not pedagogy.

The children's views are often not included in the research literature. This led towards the framing of the second and third research questions. The second research sub-question asked the young people what they saw as quality in what they read and the third research sub-question investigated differences between teachers' views of quality (where teachers represented one aspect of gatekeepers in this research) and those of the children in order to establish any differences in perspectives on content and purpose.

One theme which has emerged in the previous section is the idea that there exists a corpus of literature which exemplifies *good qualities* that the various gatekeepers wish the 11 – 16 years olds to experience in their reading. Fundamental to this is the notion of a canon in literature representing the works through time which are best representative of the development and variety of English literature

2.7 Literature for the 11 – 16 year old reader

The meaning of literature is itself a contentious issue. In the previous section I have indicated that the concept of literature lies within broader cultural, social and historical established frameworks; that the term literature itself is invested with cultural power. Cliff Hodges (2010a) encapsulates this describing curriculum literature as *a tradition to be upheld, with all the implications of status and power those two words connote* (p.62). Goodwyn (2012a) talks of the *deification* (p.216) of literature and the need to challenge this as had been done in international debates cited in the previous sections (Prinsloo, Janks, 2002; Locke, 2008; Paterson, 2008; McLean Davies et al, 2013). I have demonstrated that, by their very nature, gatekeepers take a conservative view, upholding cultural and societal norms rather than challenging them. This is particularly true when combining views of what is literature, what is appropriate in terms of literature for a curriculum and what is suitable for young people under 16 years of age to read. The lack of discussion leads to what Cliff Hodges (2010a) describes as the position of literature in the curriculum being *assumed rather than discussed* (p.61).

In the following sections I look particularly at how literature for the 11 – 16 year olds has been viewed, developed as a form and conceptualised as a literary genre.

2.7.1 Developments in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds

Many critics (for example, Leeson, 1985; Sarland, 1994; Reynolds, 2005) see the 1970s as a point when children's literature moved towards addressing realistic and contemporary issues to do with growing up and teenage life, that which is now often seen as at the centre of literature for the 11 – 16 year old age group. This is the coming of age novel, the Bildungsroman as described by Trites (2000). Arguably this kind of approach was begun slightly earlier in the USA, where there has been a longstanding debate about books for children and young adults, by authors such as Blume, Hinton, Cormier and Zindel. In 1985 Leeson expressed concern that television might sound the death knell for the book. By 2013 the book for the Young Adult (YA) reader is still being published: film and TV have actively supported its development and the target audience is presented with increasingly challenging story lines: (terminal illness (*Ways to live forever; Before I die*); suicide (*Thirteen reasons why*); death (*My sister lives on the mantelpiece);* war (*Private Peaceful, How I live now*).

2.7.2 Accessibility of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds

We can look at the cult popularity of Dickens' works with a wide audience over a hundred years ago: the extant legend states that crowds in New York stood awaiting the docking of the package boat bearing the last instalment of *Old Curiosity Shop* with the cries of: *Is Little Nell dead*? (Cody, 2007). Recently there has been a huge development in the availability and accessibility of texts in electronic form. This development in itself harks back to earlier textual popularity and availability. A plethora of texts, literary fiction, populist fiction and non-fiction are available online as e-books and are likely to be accessed by new generations confident in manipulation of screens who may not wish to pick up a physical book to read; Lang (2009) refers to this. The prevalence of sophisticated mobile phones and other electronic devices means that books are now more accessible than ever before; e-books written in instalments and available for downloads have the same appeal to modern teenagers as Dickens' magazine chapters in earlier times. Many older books are available free; some authors, such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E L James, initially gain fame through web publication. Whilst not a

focus for this study the present and future possibilities of multimodal texts cannot be ignored at the time of writing. The development and accessibility of books specifically for a young audience is a key theme; however this dissertation largely considers hard copy of books, since these are still the main unit of use in schools (Millard, 2003).

2.7.3 Teenage or Young Adult readers

In reality, the concept of childhood as a carefree state is very recent. Whilst there is still a divide between rich and poor in the 21st century, globally the rights of the child now have political prominence in such statements as the UNICEF *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), which has international resonance, or *Every Child Matters* (DfE, 2003) in England. Until 1880, and The Elementary Education Act of that year, there was no compulsory education in England. Child mortality was also high and those children surviving in poor families were needed as part of the work force from an early age. In wealthy families, portraits often bear witness to the fact that children were viewed as mini adults, training from an early age for their adult roles (museumnetwork, 2011); there was little concept of childhood as a carefree time.

The term *teenager* has its origins in the early twentieth century, first appearing in dictionaries in the late 1930s and 1940s. By the 1950s there was a growing popular teen culture represented through styles of dress and music. There was also a simultaneous growth in artefacts aimed at this part of society. Puffin and Peacock books emerging from the Penguin publishing house are an example of this in terms of books specifically aimed at that newly defined teenage age group.

Society now sees the 11 – 16 year old age group in a stage of metamorphosis: neither child nor adult in physical development, nor intellectual understanding, nor civic responsibility. It is a time of hiatus in the transition between child and adult. There are a variety of terms to describe this age group: adolescents, teenagers, young adults and so on. Physiologically and psychologically this is a time of great change and development. Erikson (1950, 1974) has written in psychological terms about the developing stages of identity with the fifth

developmental stage encompassing the teenage years and being seen as times of role identity and confusion, a familiar theme in teenage fiction and indeed the Bildungsroman.

Socially this age group has come to be regarded as problematic; media headlines link the word teenagers with problems. For example, in 2006 Lewis wrote in *The Guardian* of the growing fear society has of teenagers as a group, particularly in the UK. In terms of education this age group experiences a time of huge intellectual challenge, expectation and variety at KS3 and KS4 (NC, 2008) and this can be seen in the range and breadth of the English curriculum and assessment expectations (NC, 2008) culminating in GCSE demands at the age of 16 in England. In terms of reading, the 11 – 16 year old age group are seen to read less and with less pleasure than young people of the same age from other countries (OECD, 2002) and boys are noted as reading less than girls (Hall and Coles, 1999; Hopper, 2005, 2006; Topping, 2010; Clark and Osborne, 2008; Clark and Douglas, 2011; ESARD, 2012). These surveys also indicate that fewer young people over the age of 11 choose to read fiction and that this age group has an eclectic range of reading choices including magazines, newspapers and internet materials.

2.7.4 The growth of Young Adult Literature (YAL)

In the latter part of the twentieth and earlier part of the twenty first centuries there has been an exponential growth in the significance of the notion of teenagers or young adults in terms of society and, thus, in market terms as well. This includes a burgeoning of literature written specifically for this audience and increasingly addressing themes explicitly to do with growing up in society. The teenage audience is, broadly speaking, from 11 – 16 years old. Books for this audience are, as I stated above, categorised as children's literature, teenage literature, young adolescent literature, and young adult literature… I have been struck by Trites' (2000) use of Young Adult Literature (YAL), writing from an American perspective, as one way to describe the genre which tends:

> *To interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual*.(p.20)

Whilst some of the books considered in this research may also be about the self-discovery that Trites (2000) sees as the hallmark of YAL, others fall more broadly into a category considered as books considered suitable for the 11 – 16 year old age range. Suitability may include themes, content, style, potential for further learning or development in the judgment of the adult *gatekeepers.* Suitability may also include themes, topics or plots which are known to appeal to readers of the 11 – 16 age range; gatekeepers, already defined as those overseeing children's reading matter, may not always approve wholeheartedly of these. This leads us then to consider a broader overview of the history of children's literature, including literature particularly designated YAL but not focussing exclusively on this branch of the genre.

In recent years literature for the 11 – 16 year old reader has emerged as a specific genre in its own right. Whilst this genre is fully recognised by publishers and librarians, for example, it is not specifically acknowledged in curriculum documents in England. This relatively new way of identifying a type of literature links historically to the rise of the teenager as an acknowledged developmental stage between child and adult. The term teenager was originally coined in 1921 (Merriam Webster) in the United States of America, (USA), and had come into common usage by the mid-1940s on both sides of the Atlantic. Young Adult Literature (YAL) became used from the 1960s, probably beginning in the USA, as a term to encompass literature written for this teenage age group (Cart, 2008) at a time when the teenager was widely recognised as a social phenomenon with group interests and burgeoning purchasing power; teenagers also represented an increasing proportion of the overall population (Cart, 2008). Educationally 1972 saw the implementation of the Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA) in England from 15 to 16 and with it a growth in comprehensive education. Literature taught in schools needed to appeal to a wider range of readers. In 1975 Bullock wrote extensively about how to encourage schoolchildren to engage with a wide range of literature, appropriate texts, and what approaches to use. Indeed he uses the words *young adult* (p.134) to describe this readership.

There is a tension also in how fiction for this age is defined. In recent years some books written specifically for the 11 – 16 (or even 18/19) year old age group has

acquired a particular soubriquet (Young Adult Literature (YAL), as I noted above (Cart, 2008), where Young Adult (YA) refers particularly to the 11 – 16 year old age group. I have already referred to Trites' (2000) view of this genre of literature in terms of the Bildungsroman. Latterly, however, YAL has come to mean a genre with distinctive plot elements but which is also often designed to appeal to less able or enthusiastic readers within the 11 – 16 year old age group. Whilst the debate seems to be more vigorously addressed in the USA, this delineation and definition of YAL is equally relevant in the UK. Bucher and Manning (2005) note the importance of giving adolescents access to a variety of high quality literature which will both encourage reading for pleasure and also support the development of the skills of reading necessary for success in adult life. Herz and Gallo (2005) also note that *quality* YAL can be used to meet the needs of individuals *who are not reading* (p.109). They see YAL as a stepping stone to classics and they do not see YAL as simply for less skilled readers, although there is an acknowledgement that such books may be textually easier and often shorter in length. This desire to help young people enjoy literature whilst simultaneously helping them to become competent at synthesising the written word is a recurrent theme.

The idea of YAL is generally taken to have started with the publication of *The Outsiders* by S E Hinton (Herz and Gallo, 2005); this is seen to be the first novel explicitly written to address the contemporary lives and problems of teenagers. From that point YAL began to emerge as a discrete genre in the 1970 and 1980s; it has also become the subject of academic study. There have been numerous attempts to define the parameters of YAL (Trites, 2000; Herz and Gallo, 2005), but no authoritative definition has been agreed. It is generally agreed (Gallo (2005) et al:

- *that the protagonist will be a teenager;*
- *that the narrative is often first person, through the eyes of the protagonist*
- *that adults will have a peripheral role;*
- *that there will be some conflict;*
- *that the book will address issues relevant to the YA age group.*

Whilst Trites (2000) sees the YAL as often addressing coming of age issues, the search for self, and Gallo (2005) refers to *universal themes… the eternal questions of Who am I and where do I fit in?* (p.11), others see the issues as more pragmatic relating to issues of the moment – teenage pregnancy, AIDS, sexual identity…

2.7.5 Crossover texts

Alongside YAL, in terms of genre, we must also consider the rise in what is termed the crossover novel. Referring back to Gallo's (2005) thesis that the YAL provides a stepping stone to adult books, the crossover novel is seen as part of this. The crossover text may be written to address the perceived gap between adult and children's literature; Philip Pullman's and Meg Rosoff's books exemplify this, for example *His Dark Materials Trilogy* or *How I Live Now.* Mark Haddon's *The Curious Story of the Dog in the Night time* is often cited as one of the first examples of crossover texts (Falconer, 2008). However the crossover novel is often a YA or even children's book which has appeal for an adult audience. The Harry Potter series is an example of this aspect of crossover literature with publishers marketing the books in two different covers to appeal to the differing audiences (Falconer, 2008). Rosoff (2008) herself describes it in the following way:

> *Crossover fiction is a slippery category, neither fish nor fowl, sometimes published for adults but read by teens (*The Life of Pi*), other times published for teens but read by adults (*His Dark Materials*). (Guardian 26.09.08)*

Falconer (2008) goes further by seeing crossover literature as a genre:

> *…that calls into question the boundaries which used to define children's literature by prescribing what it should include or exclude. (p.27)*

Paradoxically it is precisely those boundaries which the school curriculum continues to make explicit in lists of prescribed or recommended texts. In defining YA or crossover literature the parameters concern narrative structure, issues and characters; simplicity of structure and language can be a positive, particularly with reference to YAL.

Much of the literature available for readers in the 11 – 16 year old age group increasingly belongs to what we will call YA or crossover literature. However, for the purposes of this study, the fiction considered here will include both that which falls specifically within the YA and crossover genre and also fiction more generally considered suitable for the 11 – 16 year old group to read within the school and curriculum context. This will not always include texts specifically about or written for 11 – 16 year old readers. This leads to the idea of a canon of literature specifically for the 11 – 16 year old age group in school. However the school canon may not necessarily include the new body of literature for the 11 – 16 year old reader represented by the YAL.

In the next section I will consider the notion of canon as a means of defining quality. Under this broad umbrella I will also consider in detail the idea of the school canon as a sub-set of the literary heritage canon and how this affects perceptions of literature suitable for the 11 – 16 year old age group.

2.8 School canon

2.8.1 Historical background to the canon

In many respects the assumption that great literature exists, often defined amorphously as literature of quality, is at the heart of this research question. The examination of the debate on the canon will seek to establish the nature of such a principle and also the difficulties inherent in establishing works, which might be selected for a school canon.

The issue of the possible existence of a canon of literature, representative of the best writing, is an ongoing debate and equally contentious. As English Literature grew to be a recognised literary form in its own right, so did the debate about what belonged in the canon increase too. In 1908 Fowler saw the classics as a traceable progression from Homer, through Roman authors to early English literature; Fowler saw an understanding of these earlier Greek and Roman texts

as vital to an appreciation of English literature. There are, however, divergent views on the benefits of reading great literature.

The idea of the literary canon was formalised by Leavis (1943). Leavis worked with Denys Thompson to develop ideas about the essence of great literature and these also related to the new ideas of Practical Criticism being put forward by Richards (1929). Texts had to *show particular kinds of moral, aesthetic and English qualities* (Maybin and Mercer, 1996, p.245) to justify inclusion in the canon and these canonical texts provided a touchstone by which to judge other texts for inclusion. Whilst new theories of criticism have grown out of the Leavis tradition, nevertheless this is a tradition which has been influential on teachers in their own education (Fleming, Hardman, Stevenson, Williamson, 2001) and translated into their own classroom practice; this may influence attitude and approaches to texts in the classroom.

For Bullock (1975) reading great literature would shape the personality, refine the sensibility, sharpen the critical intelligence; Eagleton (1996) sees great literature as that which for some reason or another somebody attaches values; Newbolt (1921) sees great literature as having a civilising influence. There is clearly an expectation that great literature will somehow improve both mind and soul and this is especially true of expectations of literature in school. For Kermode (1988), cited in Maybin and Mercer (1996) the canon is *complicit with power* (p.238); certainly true in the school context. For Butler (1991), discussing the canon on the radio, the canon is *a bonding force in a populace*; certainly true in school again.

There is also a sense of the canon harking back to a *better past.* Arnold's establishment of English literature as a recognised academic form can also be linked to Leavis' later desire that those with the necessary critical and intellectual acuity, a *small cultural minority* (p.143), should determine judgements about English literature. However that there has been debate over the value of conferring classic and thus canonical status on a text is evident from Chesterton's (1932) comment on this promotion to classic of *Alice in Wonderland* quoted by Gardner (1963):

> *Poor, poor, little Alice! She has not only been caught and made to do lessons; she has been forced to inflict lessons on others.* (p.5)

Scholes (1985) aligns literature firmly with a tradition of religious texts, even noting that *in our culture literature had been positioned in much the same place as scripture* (p.12). However, even now, there is unlikely to be agreement about what the canon might consist of and indeed the purposes of this canonisation of texts. This has been further complicated by new theories of literary criticism with new approaches to interpreting text: for example Feminist, Marxist, and poststructuralist approaches.

2.8.2 Current approaches to the school canon

The idea of a school canon is still predicated on the loosely based but widely accepted concept of a canon in literature consisting of the best and most representative works however contestable this may be, as I have argued above. This is a complex debate and draws on both lay and academic opinion and literature. Michael Rosen (1992) challenged this eloquently:

> *Greatness [in literature] is largely a conversation between academics...statements about greatness are nothing more than personal preferences. In other words, the texts we are compelled to read at school and university are simply the consequence of agreements in that conversation between academics. Nothing more or less. And these agreements may not coincide with the tastes, pleasures, values of millions of other people.* (p.156)

The idea of the underlying purpose of literature written specifically for a young audience is a key theme and links to the notion, raised above, of a canon of literature for children. Historically attitudes to what is suitable for children to read and why have changed considerably in line with cultural and social developments through time. Marsh (2004) examines the growth of a Primary Canon and expresses concern about the potential marginalisation of working class children through the choice of texts seen as appropriate to a school canon. There is a constant concern expressed about what the 11 – 16 year old age group should read. In her chapter in Styles and Arizipe (2009), Orestano (2009) looks at attitudes over the centuries: for example Victorian authors where *reading provides an effective strategy of social and moral rescue* (p.99) or Mary

Wollstonecraft who in 1787, Orestano reminds us, debated the kind of material which might prove suitable to educate the female mind. This will be explored more fully.

> *To do that, we need an education system that encourages teachers to find all sorts of different ways for children to live in books. We need a public discourse that can go beyond treating children's books as scandals, sensational sales figures and symptoms of some crisis or some 'seismic shift' in something or another.*
>
> Rosen (2005)

This opinion expressed by Michael Rosen in the quotation above is also referred to by Benton (2000) as canon *wars* (p. 269). There is an assumed view of quality and an assumption that adolescent readers should experience certain texts (the canon) as part of a progression to adult reading skills and appreciation of the literary heritage referred to in Gatekeepers (2.6). This need for progression and a growth in appreciation of literary heritage is explicit in the NC for English (2008) for England. The new iteration of the NC for English (2013), now in draft form, is still dominated by pre-1914 texts written by predominantly deceased white, male, western authors.

Benton (2000), reminds us that words such as good *quality literature, literary heritage* and *classic fiction* (p.274) appear throughout the NC document although there is no explanation of any debate or discussion about how these judgements were reached at that point in time. The section referring to books written specifically for adolescents merely states: *recent and contemporary drama, fiction and poetry written for young people and adults*. Examples of authors are given and, whilst they do include a wide selection of authors writing for adolescents at the time of publication, a list of this nature will inevitably become dated very quickly, as we have already noted in the previous section and which links to the surveys of children's reading where contemporary favourite authors differ from survey to survey.

A notion of canon linked to a literary heritage perspective appears to inform the various iterations of the NC, but what is lacking, as Cliff Hodges (2009) notes in line with Benton (2000), is a clearly stated rationale behind choices of literature in the curriculum and, indeed, why literature is included at all . It is also relevant

here that Scholes (1985) at an earlier date noted that: *The curriculum must be subject to scrutiny like everything else in our academic institutions* (p.58). This has demonstrably not been the case. Beach, Appleman, Hynds, and Wilhelm (2010) warn that whilst classical (canonical) works of literature give pupils a sense of historical and cultural development, nevertheless the study of works from the so-called canon of English literature is valueless if *students don't gain an understanding of the basis of canonisation* (p.166). For them this includes teaching why some texts are regarded as more significant than others in the literary hierarchy.

2.8.3 Gatekeepers of the school canon

There is, then, a question about who has decided that these are the best authors to recommend and based on what criteria? There is no indication of how these decisions were reached in the English NC. There is only minor reference to writers of books for the 11 – 16 year old age range compared with the range of other authors prescribed or recommended, and the choices on that list of such authors is not explained. Different authors are cited at KS3 and KS4, however poets, playwrights and novelists are all listed together, with no distinction made as to genre. There is no coherence between these lists and the lists of popular authors in recent research (Hall and Coles, 1999; National Literacy Trust, 2008). Indeed Alan Garner, wonderful storyteller though he is, has often been more popular with the gatekeepers than the teenage reader. Goodwyn's (1992), Goodwyn and Findlay (1999), research supports the notion of the deleterious effect of the NC prescriptiveness, *a cage* (p.19), on pupils' engagement with literature, and, using his surveys of teachers, advocates wider choices of fiction for use in the classroom.

Hall and Coles (1999) note that *good quality children's fiction is generally what adult 'discerning' readers choose for their offspring* (p.143) Whilst YA fiction is a growing, changing and developing field, adults with a vested interest in the reading of 11 – 16 year olds and their reading development may not always take account of this. Not only is this seen in the NC but it is also evident in the

constantly changing lists of authors popular with young readers over thirteen seen in Whitehead's (1977) list of Authors of Juvenile Quality Narrative Books (p.330); the lists of most popular authors read by adolescents identified by Hall and Coles (1999); or in a survey carried out at the University of Exeter in 2002 (Hopper, 2005); or more recently still a survey by the National Literacy Trust, Reading Connects (2008). Not only does the NC not define quality but neither do the recommended lists of authors include authors recorded as popular with the children themselves. Could it be that the adults are making judgements based on their own preferences as Hall and Coles (1999) suggest? Herz and Gallo (2005) remark that:

> *all the traditional elements of classical literature are present in most contemporary novels for young adults.* (p.11)

They mention both narrative elements, *well-rounded characters, flashbacks and foreshadowing*, and the linguistic features often valued by teachers too: *allusions, irony,* and *metaphorical language.*

Beach et al (2010) note the importance of choosing texts, possibly YAL, relevant to the experience of students but they also note that teachers are comfortable with teaching texts from the canon because they know how students will respond. This may link to the impetus to have texts which will lead to examination success (see Section *2.10.3*).

2.8.4 Ideology and the school canon

Arguments about the canon are also inextricably linked with arguments about ideology represented in texts, again bringing us back to the gatekeepers. Hunt (1999) notes that children's texts are seen less as classic because of how they are written but because adults perceive them as ideologically *useful.* He points out that people may well enjoy one kind of book but recommend another because of its perceived quality, leading to a possible tension between school texts and those chosen for private pleasure. Tucker (1984) reminds us to be aware that in surveying books written, published and often purchased by adults we may be

describing what *children merely get to like rather than what they like to get* (p.6). Whilst Tucker was writing in the 1980s his comments about censorship, for example, of Blyton, remain resonant of current debates about novels such as *Doing it* by Melvin Burgess. Herz and Gallo (2005) note that *the classics and a few contemporary novels still dominate the curriculum* (p.12); although they are talking about the English Literature curriculum in the USA, the statement is equally applicable in English classrooms.

Notions of ideology link very closely to notions of canon; it is axiomatic that all writing has its own ideology. Any reader needs to be equipped, or learn to be equipped, to understand this. I have already mentioned that Beach et al (2010), in writing about teaching literature to adolescents, are explicit about the need for those involved in both teaching and learning to know from whence comes the idea of the canon. They note that the canon is a *cultural representation* which *shows a people, a nation and its literature in the best possible light* (p.167). Even if we start with the ideology an author brings to his/her work, the economic and political background to the writing, the ideology of the gatekeepers who condemn or commend a text, the institutional ideologies in which a text may be read… we begin to get some idea of the complexity and of the difficulty in establishing a canon; more so in advocating it as an immutable aspect of curriculum. In turn, the notion of a school canon can also lead to complex ideological approaches and understandings.

Sarland (1999) reminds us of the *complexity and the ambiguity* (p.51) of the ideology of works in the accepted school canon and, indeed, in works for the 11 – 16 year old readership in general; an idea repeated by Hunt (1996). This brings us back again to Hall and Coles (1999) and the importance of beginning where the reader is. In this context Appleyard (1991) also refers to the problem when the ideology represented in a given text may be very far from the reader's own experience; this is particularly true in multicultural societies (Turvey and Yandell, 2011; Shah, 2013; Goodwyn, 2012a) . The English NC in England requires readers to learn of the literary heritage but also to be given opportunities to learn about their own identity and also *to relate texts to their social and historical context* (p.88). Hollindale (1991) gives advice about how a reader may learn to

recognise the implicit ideology, but this presupposes a varied canon, representative of multiple cultural and social perspectives. This may not be the case with the school canon, or a canon such as Pike (2002) advocates. Goodwyn's (1999) warning is also important in this context:

> *English teachers see the National Curriculum Cultural Heritage model as profoundly impersonal and irrelevant to the lives of their students.* (p.23)

This has been echoed more recently in New Zealand, South Africa and Australia as the curriculum is reconsidered in the context of the needs of a modern, liberated multicultural society (Prinsloo, Janks, 2002; Locke, 2008; Paterson, 2008; McLean Davies et al, 2013).

2.8.5 The value of the school canon

Quality and the notion of an appropriate canon of literature for the 11 – 16 year old age range in the twenty first century are closely linked, particularly in curriculum terms. There is, however, debate about the value of a canon in relation to children's reading development. Whilst Pike (2002) sees texts from what may be termed the traditional canon as having real relevance to adolescents in today's society, others question the whole concept of the school canon. Benton (2000) reminds us of the *sacred origins* (p.270) of the concept of a literary canon and asks us to look again at the literary idols we may be worshipping unquestioningly. He states:

- *that the inevitability of the canon cannot be taken for granted;*
- and *that the School canon is subject to special pressures in respect of its readership and institutional functions.* (p.271)

Benton questions the ascendancy of an institutional assumption that quality is subsumed by the heritage model of English Literature. He queries recommended lists of fiction for young people based on this heritage model, his reservations reflecting Eagleton's (1983) view of a canon of literature as *fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time* (p.356) and, by definition, not appropriate at other points in time. Fleming et al (2001) talked to training teachers and found that as few as 23% of these thought that the traditional canon

should dominate the curriculum; nor did the majority of this same group believe that students in school would learn much about *traditional values* (p.30) from studying texts from the canon. They were similarly unconvinced that there was a significant place in the English curriculum for learning about the history of English literature.

Benton asks: *What is the relationship between these lists and adolescent readers?* (p.275). His hope is for a return to the Cox notion of reader response and a *willingness to trust – and therefore support – English teachers' professional judgement about the texts that are appropriate for their classes* (p. 276). He does not, however, point us to criteria for supporting judgments on appropriate texts. This is echoed by Foster's (1977) earlier remark *Good Books for whom*? A pertinent question in terms of the school reader and also in terms of how quality may be judged.

Sumara (2001), writing from an American perspective, also sees the school canon as idiosyncratic. He refers to the notion of the book included on a school literature curriculum as a *closed canonical text* (p.172), which is text that has a fixed curriculum purpose. He describes this as a text being:

> *inscribed with the authority attached to it by its inclusion within the formalized institutions of public schooling, and by the way in which it exists in terms of the relationships between students and teacher. (*p.173)

Sumara sees a paradox here in that children are asked to respond personally to a text, through reader –response theory, and yet that response will ultimately be closed in order to address *the truth* in the text required by the curriculum or the examination syllabus. This challenges, or perhaps develops, Benton's (2004) wish that reader response theory allows children to make meaning *through the activities they perform on texts* (p.112).

A similar debate is extant in NZ, where issues of finding literary texts for school use relevant to a multi-cultural readership are currently significant. A research project (TLRI, 2009) asked teachers to consider what they thought to be texts in

the literary tradition or what were canonical texts. Amongst these teachers the school canon was described in terms of the *expanded canon* that is embracing a wider range of text type; and genres and the *dynamic canon* where texts integrate into the group's cultural legitimisation in the curriculum heritage (p.36). This in itself harks back to Bourdieu's (2002) idea of the consecration of texts through their *selection or deselection* (p.23) for curriculum purposes.

The Australian Curriculum for English (2011) also espouses the idea of an evolving canon. In this case literary texts recommended are broadly summarised as having *enduring or artistic value* (p.6). The word *dynamic* is used in this curriculum and texts are valued for the impact they may have for enriching *students' scope of experience* (ibid). In the USA, Common Core State Standards for English lists of texts for study by the students are there as exemplars meant *only to show individual titles that are representative of a range of topics and genres* (p.58) and the sense again is of choosing texts to benefit and nurture the students' experience of literature.

2.8.6 Pedagogy and the Canon

Whilst the idea of canon appears to inform iterations of curriculum regarding the teaching of English Literature in England and internationally (*2.8.2*), there appear to be few links between the inclusion of works from the canon in these same curricula and a clearly articulated pedagogy for either use of the canon or reason for its inclusion. Whilst Beach et al (2010) write in detail about the place of the canon their ideas are broadly practical and not argued through the lens of research and pedagogy. They state that: *We are teaching books. We are teaching ideas.* (p.167) but do not give pedagogical context for this arguably valuable proposition. The use of CHAT as an analytical tool allows a close examination of the ideological or culturally embedded views on the choice of fiction by examining these views as aspects of rules in the Activity Triangle framework.

There is extensive discussion of the value or otherwise of experience of works from the canon to young readers (Yandell, 2008; McLean Davies et al, 2013;

Goodwyn, 2012a; Prinsloo, Janks, 2002; Benton, 2000; Shah, 2013) but conversely little consideration of the pedagogy which informs the teaching of canonic literature. I refer again to Cliff Hodges (2010a) who notes that there is a lack of rationalisation for the inclusion of literature per se in the curriculum; that the status of literature is an assumption not rooted in recent academic debate. In England the introduction of the Framework for the teaching of English (DfEE, 2001) is seen as a point where the boundaries between the teaching of literature and the teaching of literacy became blurred (Domaille, 2003; Goodwyn 2012a). This in turn has led to a loss of the whole text as a focus for literary study (see Section *2.10.2*) and the marginalisation of curriculum emphasis on the developing reader of books (Goodwyn, 2002; Domaille, 2003; Cliff Hodges, 2010a).

Goodwyn (2012a) is explicit that research about the pedagogy behind the teaching of literature has not influenced policy makers in England. McLean Davies et al (2013) note that the inclusion of canonical literature in the curriculum in Australia is still rooted in an imperialistic historical past and that *all forms of engagements with literary text are mediated by the institutional settings in which they occur* (p.227); this is implied to be expediency not pedagogy.

This lack of clear pedagogy behind the prescription of, choice and use of text in the curriculum is further exacerbated by new and exigent assessment regimes. I return to this in (*2.10.2*) and indicate how this influenced the development of the research sub-question 4 for this project.

2.9 Addressing the reading needs of the 11 – 16 year olds

Teachers of English have, nevertheless, a key role in identifying texts of quality for the readers with whose needs they are familiar. In 1973 Pat D'Arcy, talking of the selection of texts for use in the classroom, asked: *Who should chose the books – reader or teacher?* (p. 14), she goes on to cite Flowers (1966) and his view that books chosen for use in the classroom should *illuminate the students' experiences*, referring particularly to the emotional experience of those students. Hall and Coles (1999) are explicit about the need to refer to the reading needs

and interests of this 11 – 16 year old age group. They are very clear that the development of reading (and here they encompass both reading skills and narrative content of text) comes from teachers listening to what children and adolescents want to read and enjoy reading; they demonstrate this in their premise of teachers working from pupils' starting points as readers. Both D'Arcy and Coles and Hall link back to Dixon (1966) and his description of the tension between the external, given culture and the personal culture that the child brings to his or her own reading and which will be fundamental to the development of the child's engagement with literature. For Millard (2002) it is also about allowing children to learn both to take personal pleasure in reading, and also to acquire the ability to discuss literature:

> *I was arguing for the development of an understanding of reading that allows all pupils to progress from personal and private engagement in self-selected reading to a shared public discourse that allowed for analysis and critique as well as engagement and pleasure in the text under consideration.* (p.164)

Sarland (1994b) had illustrated the value of knowing the reader when his contribution to a debate about *quality* and *canonicity* related to *material widely regarded as non-quality* (p.113). He interviewed children about their reading pleasure in the Point Horror series and discovered that children could deconstruct these books in a way which showed they could apply criteria relating to, for example, story structure, narrative perspective and genre conventions. They were able to demonstrate skills of literary judgement and discernment in the context of texts which were relevant to them. Sarland (1994b) goes on to remind us that social groups construct different canons, and that *in a diverse society with a complex and diverse entertainment industry, that pleasure and those judgements of quality will manifest in diverse ways* (p.129). He urges us to listen to the adolescent readers who, he notes, will look for something new but who will nevertheless use discernment in judging quality. This in itself echoes the statement in the TLRI report (2009) from New Zealand, noting that each teacher operates within their own *discursive frame* (p.27) meaning that the teachers too will manifest judgements of quality in differing ways according to their own cultural and social history.

Goodwyn (2012a) gives a pertinent reminder that the debate about how to engage children with reading literature is still extant. He makes the point that reading should be an *authentic experience* (p.213) for the reader and argues for a mode of reading that allows for reader *'engagement', 'reflection' and 'immersion'* (p.216). This is part of a wider argument about the value of engaging young people in the study of literature through encouraging reader response and developments of reader response approaches. This means encouraging young people to engage with reading for pleasure as a starting point, a point also made by Daisey (2010) and Westbrook (2013) and which continues to build on Hall and Coles (1999). Goodwyn (2008) also notes the value of a young person *getting lost* (p.9) in a book as part of developing reading interests; I expand on this in the next section.

2.9.1 Developmental reading needs of the 11 – 16 year old

In the previous sections it was established that it was adults' perceptions of young people's needs and interests that are central to the development, publication and distribution of texts written for 11 – 16 year olds and that this has historical precedence. Hollindale (1994) says:

> *People slip without realising it from talking about children's books to talking about educational philosophy* (p.4)

This is in itself is reminiscent of the debate from earlier times detailed by Bottoms (2006) and indicates that a concern with what children and adolescents read continues to be inextricably linked with their moral, social, emotional and intellectual development.

In this section I shall explore how notions of the moral, social, emotional and intellectual developmental needs of 11 – 16 year olds inform choices made by both creators of the literature and those who publish, recommend and buy it. Appleyard (1991) also makes the point that the psychological development of readers through a life span, from a literary perspective, is an area little researched. Nevertheless in the previous section I have already demonstrated the interest in this aspect of children's literature shown by for example, Trimmer and Strahan and the influence of early philosophers such as Rousseau and Locke on the content of what was written for young people.

There has been considerable interest in the relationship between the reading of the 11 – 16 year old age group and the development of their social and emotional understanding at a period when they are undergoing great physiological and psychological development. Appleyard (1991) considers the psychological development of reading through a reader response theory where both reader and text simultaneously interact with text in a form of continual feedback and reinterpretation. The text arises out of the writer's own social, political and cultural beliefs and is interpreted within the context of the reader's own beliefs. Whilst the Piagetian developmental stages provide an attractive model for explaining reader development, Appleyard acknowledges the narrowness and limitation of this approach. Reading development is not simply about cognitive development but also about the development of a schema of social understanding. This is also reflected in the NC KS4 for English in England rubric that reading should *develop their understanding of less familiar viewpoints and situations* (NC, 2008). Piagetian views of cognitive development also look for a movement from imagination to increasing logic thus challenging a view that reading stretches intellectual capacity through engaging the imagination and perhaps bridging the earlier division between the *romantics* and the *educationists*.

Trites (2000) considers the particular YA novel genre in relation to nineteenth century German concepts of Bildungsroman and Entwickelungsroman, where the former is a coming of age novel and the latter a novel of development, both concerning adolescent protagonists. She sees the Entwicklungsroman as a story of development in which a truth is discovered but adulthood not reached. She places *problem novels* (p.14) of the 70s in this category, novels which may currently be termed issues' fiction. She is very open to the notion that growth in these novels may not lead to redemption and sees the fact that many of the adolescent protagonists are not *enfranchised in their culture* (p.19) as significant learning for the reader. However she is explicit that the narrative structure of these novel forms may *teach adolescent readers to accept a certain amount of repression as cultural imperative* (p.55). This tension between intended reader and intended purpose is recurrent.

Pinsent (2005) also looks at a trend from the 1970s to create literature for adolescents which has come to be known as issues-based; that is literature which frames social and moral debates of the time in a fictional context. Inherent in this is the role of the author and the socio-political stance adopted. This trend may date from a much earlier time than Pinsent allows: Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood,* and indeed adaptations since then, including a feminist version from the 1970s, contain implicit warnings to the contemporary audience about recommended behaviour. In Perrault it is important to do what one is told; the child in the Russian versions of the 1970s, on the other hand, learns to be brave and iconoclastic through following the example of her brave (female) grandmother: harking back to the earliest recorded versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, mentioned earlier, with that feisty, resourceful and courageous heroine. The transmutation of the *Little Red Riding Hood* story through time is, in itself, an example in microcosm of how ideas and ideals about what is appropriate and suitable for young readers change and develop with the era and that this *tells us a lot about what society thinks about childhood at any given moment* (p.71).

With issues- based literature, the didactic stance of the author is highly significant. Pinsent (2005) notes that earlier authors (such as Nesbitt, Streatfeild) were middle class and propagated middle class values. Readings of some works from the 1970s concerned with issues current then, for example immigration, can now be read as reflecting the authors' views in an omniscient and didactic manner: McLean Davies et al's (2013) *view of the literary work as the unstable product of the situation in which it is read and appropriated (p.230).* However more recent authors seem to deliberately and provocatively push the boundaries both in terms of plot and language to ally themselves to a position of rebellion they believe is occupied by the audience: *Doing It* by Melvin Burgess is a case in point where he writes of his desire to write *a knobby book for boys* (quoted in Spring, 2004).

In recent years issues based fiction also appears to have moved from fiction more rooted in contemporary social issues such as feminism and immigration (Pinsent, 2005) to address issues far more personal to an individual adolescent. There are a number of texts sensitively exploring the establishing of a sexual identity (*Strange Boy, Postcards from No-Man's Land*). Teenage suicide, the aftermath

and issues of responsibility is explored in *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Teenage pregnancy is seen from the male and female perspective *(Dear Nobody*, *Slam*). The dysfunctional family is commonplace and often presented with ambivalence, no guarantee of the happy ending.

Bramwell (2005, p.141) makes the point that *adolescence can be viewed as a time of alienation from and conflict with society.* Fiction can provide, in a different setting, a model for the adolescent to test out and assess new roles in safety. Bramwell goes on to assert, for example, the place of magic and fantasy in this search for role and identity. It is possible that the removal of normal limits and situations in fantasy in some way represents the adolescent's own feeling of alienation. Equally Appleyard (1991) looks at the psychological development of the adolescent as an intense internal feeling where external realities may be rejected. This relates to the work of Freud and Erikson on the psychological development of the teenager.

Mar et al. (2006) look at the transformative power of fiction from a psychological perspective. They consider how books may be considered literally *life-changing* (p.695). They construct an argument demonstrating that the emotional neural responses to reading about social situations in fiction replicate those same neural responses in a real life situation and develop this to indicate that the reading of fiction can improve a child's Theory of Mind abilities: simply put, this means here empathy with another or the understanding that others may see the world differently from oneself. This leads them to conclude that it may be possible that a reader, here an 11 – 16 year old, may improve their own *social inference* abilities:

> *the simplest proposal is that frequent fiction readers expose themselves to concrete social knowledge embedded within stories, which is then applied to real-world interactions.* (p.698)

Whilst the results of their empirical study of the effects of fiction reading on developing skills of empathy require further investigation, nevertheless they conclude that:

> *stories could prove a powerful tool for educating both children and adults about understanding others, an important skill currently under-stressed in most educational settings.* (p.708)

This appears to resonate with the NC for English in England rubric at KS4, where the rubric referring to *relating texts to their social and historical context* (p.88) indicates that texts read should support school pupils in *understanding that attitudes and behaviours change over time* which appears to be in line with Beach et al (2010) and their strong advocacy that students should know why books are recommended and the context and culture in which these same books are written.

However there is no indication of what specific academic research has informed the literature aspect of the development of the NC in England, nor a rationale for it. Critics have argued that the NC is content not theory driven (Gillard, 1995; Donaldson,1978). Despite concerns about rigidity in his theories of development, nevertheless this also has resonance with Erikson's (1974) delineation of adolescence as a search for identity in which fiction can provide a vicarious model for experimenting with different roles. Taubenheim (1979) considers how links between the search for identity in adolescence and the potential for exploring new roles through literature are important. In this article she identifies texts which might explicitly help the adolescent in exploring challenging roles: *The Outsiders*, mentioned above, is included here.

Authors themselves also address this issue. Melvin Burgess wrote *Doing It* explicitly for a teenage boy audience. The text deliberately focuses on the sexual activities of a group of friends. Burgess' own moral stance may possibly be viewed in that the majority of the protagonists are post 16, however the language in which the books is couched is explicit, challenging and of the vernacular. The controversy engendered by the book is a microcosm of the gatekeeper debate we return to later. Others (Fine, 2003) have challenged his purpose in producing such an explicit book with such a sexually explicit purpose and we will return to this theme in considering the gatekeepers of quality.

2.10 Fiction for 11 – 16 year olds in a school context

Fiction in school is often used for specific purposes beyond enjoyment; the examination imperative, bemoaned by Fowler (1908), is still significant here and I have already discussed the significance of the school canon which substantially informs choices of fiction text in school. There is a demonstrable dissonance between encouraging engagement with reading and curriculum demands (Goodwyn, 2008, 2012a; Cliff Hodges, 2010a; Bodman, Taylor, Morris, 2012). This dissonance is now particularly pronounced in England (Yandell, 2008; Shah, 2013) and appears to be linked to emphasis an on assessment outcomes (Bodman, Taylor and Morris, 2012; Domaille, 2003; Goodwyn, 2012a). In the following sections I explore this further.

2.10.1 Choices

I have already demonstrated through the research literature that the use of fiction, within school and for private reading, has been seen as a powerful vehicle for delivering a range of educational benefits. This has been acknowledged fully by those with a close professional interest in the teaching of English too (Goodwyn, 2008; Domaille, 2003). However along with what literature may offer to the young adult reader, comes the need to find ways to engage this readership with books for both classroom use and private reading. In terms of CHAT the choice of text represents the tool which allows classroom achievement of an object, usually, as I illustrate through the research literature linked more to examination or curriculum outcomes than those of pleasure in reading.

Over a century ago, in 1908, Fowler addressed the first meeting of the English Association. His theme was the teaching of literature. He rails against an examination system that has *injuriously influenced the teaching of English literature* (p.2) and he raises issues of the dangers of slow paced reading of texts in school. Whilst he is suspicious of *present day literature* (p.4) for its *sentimentalism,* his closing comments that teachers need:

> *to have a feeling that literature is a help to them in their own lives , and the earnest desire that it should be a help to the lives of others.* (p. 6)

are resonant of current concerns (OFSTED, 2003).

That successive governments in the UK have been instrumental in encouraging the growing significance of English in the curriculum, including the teaching of literature, can be seen from the four significant reports on the teaching of English over a sixty year period in the twentieth century. In 1921 Newbolt (1921) acknowledged the importance of English Literature, as opposed to the Latin and Greek classical literature, as an important element in educating the whole child. His belief was that using English Literature in school could provide:

> *a means of contact with great minds, a channel by which to draw upon their experience with profit and delight, and a bond of sympathy between the members of a human society. (p.15)*

He overtly acknowledges links in his own thinking to those of Wordsworth and the Romantics and goes on to cite the place of literature in schools as relating to the Wordsworthian ideal of:

> *two different methods of using literature in education, the practical and the pedantic, the real and the unreal. ……..Books are not things in themselves; they are merely the instruments through which we hear the voices of those who have known life better than ourselves*. (p.16)

This is reminiscent of Fowler (1908) and may indicate a growing interest in the educational purposes to which English literature would contribute and which continue in current English NC and Programme of Study (PoS) iterations in England. However Newbolt (1921) is also balancing the needs for pragmatism in education in terms of stating the importance of mass literacy: a very modern approach and one that also places the reading of books centrally, particularly books to which the young reader can relate:

> *though all great literatures will present deep and universal truths, in education that will be the more intelligible and powerful which presents the student with*

> *experience of time and circumstances more nearly related to his own.* (p.16)

Newbolt's support for literature written in English and serving as a conduit to other literature (ancient classics, foreign literature) is still found in the NC requirements at KS3 and KS4; the view that literature may have a *practical* and *pedantic* use still informs the structure of Schemes of Work for English lessons. Indeed Newbolt's reference to the *The teaching of English in Secondary Schools,* 1910 (p.24) makes a link back to the concerns of educators following on from Trimmer and indeed the Romantics such as Coleridge. Bullock (1975) and Cox (1989) continue with a broad and liberal interpretation of literature suitable for secondary school students, the 11 – 16 year old age range. They also embrace the *practical* and *pedantic* role of works of fiction in the classroom and beyond. Both accept that fiction in the classroom may be for close study or:

> *a springboard to be barely touched before taking off for the element of personal experience or social issue.* (*Bullock, 1975,* p.133*)*

They both also see great value in encouraging private reading for pleasure and, as OFSTED (2003) and also Hall and Coles (1999), note the importance of the teacher's knowledge, particularly knowledge of contemporary texts in making appropriate recommendations for secondary school age young people to read. Bullock and Cox comment on the importance of the teacher having knowledge of the child's reading interests and past experiences; this idea recurs in Hall and Coles (1999). For Bullock (1975) this involves teachers' *knowledge of what is available, especially in good modern children's literature (*p 128)*;* for Cox a range of reading material, including works from the heritage of English Literature is an important component of the school syllabus for literature, and this appears on the level descriptors for the first and subsequent versions of the NC for English. However Cox also stresses the need to look at authors who *have not traditionally formed part of the 'literary canon'* (p.94). Whilst not referring specifically to books written for the 11 – 16 year old age group, he does also refer to books written by *underrepresented* social groups, although without specifying what these may be.

This is not an issue simply in the UK. George (2000) notes that teachers of adolescents in the USA may have learned about literature specifically for the

adolescent age group during their teacher training but that they very often revert to teaching works from the *traditional canon* (p.2) once in school, despite their knowledge and enthusiasm for the texts specifically written for the adolescent age group.

Cox states that: *Using sensitivity and tact, teachers should help pupils to tackle texts of increasing difficulty* (p.30). This would at least imply that teachers, and indeed librarians and parents, would be cognisant of the young readers' technical reading ability if not their precise reading interests. Hall and Coles (1999) hark back to Bullock and also Dixon (1996) with their encouragement to start *where the children are now (*p.89) in selecting books. The current English NC (2008) states that books should be chosen that are *informed by the cultural context of the school and the experiences of the students (*p.93) including books that are specifically written *for young people as well as adults* (p.94). More recently Herz and Gallo (2005) note the importance of books specifically written for readers from 11 – 16 in helping them to develop discrimination:

> *Choice and* self-*selection are an important component of reading development. Students want to choose all kinds of books from YAL to classic or contemporary literature.* (p.6)

This indicates a longstanding and recurrent acknowledgement of the importance of engaging the young reader's interest as a prerequisite to developing reading interests and interaction with texts for other purposes.

One broader issue which is not addressed by any of these however, is a more fundamental question and that is one posed by Scholes (1985) about the place and meaning of literature in the curriculum. Scholes summarises the potential role of literature at the point when he was writing as:

> *what they (students) need from us now is the kind of knowledge and skill that will enable them to make sense of their own worlds, to determine their own interests, both individual and collective, to see through the manipulations of all sorts of texts in all sorts of media, and to express their own views in some appropriate manner.* (p.15)

This appears to fit with Herz and Gallo (2005) above and does put specific learning needs of the readers at the forefront, perhaps making a tenuous link to the stated NC requirement for books that match the experiences of the students

in school. However, the dissonance I mentioned in 2.10 between encouraging Goodwyn's (2012a) 'engagement', 'immersion' and 'reflection' in reading and fulfilling curriculum and assessment demands can lead to choices of text being influenced by the length (Goodwyn, 2012a) or the potential for textual exercises such as prediction and sequencing (Domaille, 2003). This is, as I noted at the start of this section, conceptualised in CHAT as choice of a tool for a particular object. Pedagogy, in terms of the development of literature appreciation or reading for pleasure skills, is notably absent in reasons for choice of text for use in classroom. This is despite the widespread acceptance and concern that adolescents do not read widely, or for pleasure (Westbrook, 2013; Clark and Foster, 2005). I develop this in the next section.

2.10.2 The purposes of literature as an educational tool

There is, however, some tension when it comes to the educational purposes for which fiction may be used in schools; this may also be linked to the lack of a clearly defined pedagogic rationale for the literature prescribed in the curriculum; the object in the CHAT framework. I have already alluded to the idea of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds as having a purpose in helping these young people to engage with their own development and growing up issues (Trites, 2000) and others) and I will return to this. The tension exists in the parallel desires of the gatekeepers of 11 – 16 year old readers to give these readers both an enduring interest and pleasure in the act of reading but also to use works of fiction for education in the broadest terms. The educational purposes can be those, personal, social moral, and emotional issues that I have already mentioned; they may also be specific educational purposes linked to such concepts as historical knowledge, understanding of literary techniques language techniques, or precise linguistic knowledge.

This tension existed as far back as the debates raised by Trimmer and Coleridge, recounted earlier, and have been recurrent over the past one hundred years and I refer back to Fowler's irritation with the tyranny of the examination here. This tension is illustrated fully in the NC and encapsulated in the Draft NC for English

in England (2013) where the sections on Reading for Understanding and Reading for Meaning are considerably more detailed than the breadth of recommended reading; and where *pedagogic* issues such as *building on grammatical knowledge*, *evaluating vocabulary choices*, *synthesising information* or *evaluating literary choices* (p.4) have precedence over any mention of pleasure.

Bullock (1975) also notes this same tension at an earlier point indicating that what to do with fiction in the secondary classroom is problematic:

> *There is an equal polarity of view on what should be done with literature in the classroom. To some teachers there is no question but that this should consist of a close and detailed examination of the text, each successive encounter an attempt to sharpen discrimination.* (p.128)

Wyse and Jones (2002) refer explicitly to this issue, considering it to relate to potential problems in the training, in the understanding, of teachers in terms of teaching literature or specifically in the precise objectives of the National Literacy Strategy:

> *Worse still, the teachers we train have fewer and fewer opportunities to understand children's relation to story, and instead see story as a vehicle for practical knowledge transmission.* (p.79)

Whilst their research focuses on the primary classroom, the concerns they raise relate to classroom teaching at all levels. They note how story is often used primarily to illustrate grammatical functions and link this current emphasis to a focus on grammar for writing: that identification and discussion of particular grammatical features being used in a chosen text will help young people to improve their own writing. They see this as retrogressive, referring to how teachers thought that: *Texts were seen as valuable if they clearly provided good examples of adverbs* (p.82). The study of a book often refers to the *pedantic* exercises that can be harvested from a work of fiction. This resonates with the work of Domaille (2003), Westbrook (2013) and Goodwyn (2012a) all of whom see a problem in fragmenting texts, not reading whole texts or using a literary text as a vehicle simply for developing linguistic or grammatical knowledge. The

CHAT framework provides a particularly useful way of conceptualising this in terms of tool and object.

Over a hundred and fifty years ago Dickens identified a similar problem in his portrayal of Gradgrind's incessant desire for *facts* arising from text. Whilst there is no doubt of the value of narrative text as a model for effective writing (Myhill et al, 2012), this becomes a problem when the fiction text is no more than a model. Rosen (2005) identifies this as a problem where *whole books are* ***not being read*** and have become a vehicle for spotting and transmitting *where books are being chopped up into fragments …. These fragments are then used as examples for exercises on spotting verbs and similes.* Both Goodwyn (2012a) and McLean Davies et al, (2013), tellingly from an English and Australian perspective, use the example of *Great Expectations* as a text used in extract form as a result of the demands of testing or the need to use literature *as a vehicle for mechanistic outcomes* (Goodwyn, 2012a, p.224). Writing from a Norwegian perspective, Aase (2011) notes that curriculum prescription has turned the teaching of literature into a vehicle for developing skills where *the literacy purpose is expressed in instrumental and utilitarian terms (p.124),* indicating a common problem for teaching literature beyond just anglophone curricula.

Wyse and Jones (2002) conclude that children's learning is primarily located in whole texts, but that this may well include reflection on linguistic processes as part of the study of whole text. However it does appear from the research literature that there is a problem when the use of English literature in the classroom is required to meet many curriculum goals and may not have a clear pedagogic framework nor be simply focussed on the work of literature per se. In terms of CHAT this can be closely examined through the tool aspect of the Activity Triangle. The object aspect of the Activity Triangle similarly allows the purpose or aim of the activity to be examined separately from the actual tool which is used to achieve the object.

New critical theory has not impinged largely on the reading curriculum in schools in the UK, New Zealand (NZ) or the USA. Sumara (2001) notes that reader response theory continues to be key in the school curriculum and that insights

from new critical theory have been *difficult to insert into schooling practices* (p.172). Sumara considers that the prevalent approach in schools is still largely based on reader response theory because it encourages identification with character and can *sponsor personal associations* (p.170). However Miller (2003) notes that *classroom interactions with literature cut off students from their own responses* (p.289). Neither Miller nor Sumara refer to a clearly articulated pedagogy for teaching literature. Whilst research sub-question 4 explicitly investigates pedagogy, research sub-question 3 led to opportunities for the teachers to indicate how they chose texts for classroom use and the teaching approaches they used for those texts; in *3.10.3* I show how this was part of the final Interview schedule.

In the next section I look specifically on the impact of the assessment and testing regime on the use of literature in the classroom.

2.10.3 Fiction for 11 – 16 year olds and examinations

The problem with fiction texts studied solely for examinations noted by Fowler (1908) can impact even now on how fiction texts are used in the classroom. There is anecdotal evidence of teachers teaching to the test, that is, focusing on key passages in books that will be tested and training pupils in appropriate answers; this has been exacerbated since teachers have become accountable for pupils' results. Dymoke (2002) notes this phenomenon in relation to the teaching of the Northern Examination Board (NEAB) GCSE poetry Anthology. She records that teachers noted their own *tendency to lead the class or teach to the exam* (p.87). She also noted the deleterious effect on pupils' enjoyment of poetry of teachers having to teach the examination Anthology. Whilst this research focused on poetry at GCSE, the same reported strictures can equally apply to the teaching of the fiction text: the texts are prescribed; there are specified Attainment Objectives for the pupils to demonstrate; there is little time for teaching strategies to encourage personal response.

This problem is not limited to the UK. In the report on a project in NZ investigating the Teaching of Literature in a Multicultural Classroom (2009), researchers noted

the impact of a rigorous, curriculum imposed testing model on the teaching of literature in the classroom. The researchers' concern is that *the engagement with and enjoyment of literary texts should not be regarded as an optional extra* (p.150) in the classroom. They reinforce Sumara's (2001) ideas in stating the key reasons for studying literature in the classroom:

> *There are two related justifications for prioritising literature:*
>
> *literary engagement as identify formation*
> *literary engagement as developing one's meaning-making repertoire.* (p.150)

Whilst deploring the effect of examinations on the teaching and learning of literature, they record how teachers felt that teaching to the examination was not just removing flexibility in teaching approaches but was also impeding student enjoyment in texts used in the classroom. This same view is reported by Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) referring to the UK. They also note how problems with having to teach syllabus or examination texts in the classroom can lead to alienation of pupils with teachers resorting to inappropriate teaching methods - *chalk and talk* - in order to deliver information rather than encourage engagement with texts.

This need to satisfy examiners or comply with assessment procedures also leads to an ambivalence about how to teach literature in the classroom. In this respect Richards-Kamal (2008) confirms the curriculum and examination need for students at KS3 and KS4 in England to make knowledge about literature explicit. Richards-Kamal goes on to say that in KS4 the key skill students in school need is the ability to *label* bits of literature in order to succeed (p.63). This is linked too, to a classroom power balance, where examination/curriculum authority is paramount, not pedagogy; this is explored through rules in the CHAT analytic framework.

Fleming et al (2001) and Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) both consider how teachers may be drawn to teaching literature according to Reader Response or Personal Growth models but are forced by curriculum and examination pressures into reverting to a literary heritage model. Goodwyn and Findlay note that:

> *English teachers see the National Curriculum Cultural Heritage model as profoundly impersonal and irrelevant to the lives of their students.* (p.23)

Both Fleming et al and Goodwyn and Findlay note that teachers would find teaching literature more rewarding with less curricular and examination circumscription. Goodwyn returns to this theme in 2008 and 2012 and notes, over a decade later, that policy makers, do not heed research into best practice teaching and that examination and *the instrumental requirements of eg Frameworks* have *restricted* the teaching of literature (Goodwyn, 2012a, p.220).

Taking this further Goodwyn (2012a) also notes that the *status of literature has been compromised by the assessment regime (p.222).* Bodman, Taylor, Morris (2012) build on this by noting that a regime based on pupil performance which in turn is used to assess teacher performance damages teachers' professional ability to make decisions based in pedagogy rather than accountability. The examination regime has been seen to impact unfavourably on the teaching of literature in the classroom over decades. The most recent research indicates that the *assessment regime,* where outcomes not pedagogy are key, may be adversely influencing the way literature is chosen, approached and taught. (Goodwyn, 2012a; McLean Davies et al, 2013; Richards-Kamal, 2008; and others).

2.10.4 Learning about issues relevant to the 11 – 16 year old reader

In the previous section I referred to Melvin Burgess' decision to write a book aimed at a particular mid adolescent audience of boys in order to empower them both as readers and in coming to terms with aspects of their own identity. Within the broad terms of the Bildungsroman and Entwicklungsroman that Trites (2000) uses to categorise YA fiction it is possible to identify a number of recurrent narrative themes to do with growing up. It is apparent that authors regard rites of passage and growing up narratives as appropriate for the 11 – 16 year old readership audience and that this is not a new phenomenon. In *Little Women* Louisa May Alcott wrote the archetypal novel of coming of age; Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* or

Kipling's *Jungle Boy* fall into the same category. Each of these novels is clearly also rooted in the social and moral imperatives of the historical time and geographical place in which they were written although, arguably, some of the characters, Jo in *Little Women* for example, embrace attitudes challenging to the society of the time. In this respect, Pinsent (2005) comments on an inherent didacticism from authors, where books may be *used to inculcate acceptable morals and ethics* (p.192); sometimes these may be the collective morals of the society and sometimes those of the author.

Whilst fiction from earlier epochs dealt with leaving home, loss and separation, more recently narrative topics are grittier and more hard-hitting, more explicitly linked to the development of influences on YA identity such as sex, race, bullying and disability amongst many others. Pinsent (2005) sees this development in narrative approach as coinciding with the introduction of discrimination legislation in the 1970s. The question is whether narrative themes linked specifically to phases of YA development in themselves represent quality or indeed a lack of quality driven by narrative imperative?

The debate about *Doing It* encapsulates some of the problems. Anne Fine (2003) wrote an excoriating review of *Doing It*. She is fully cognisant of the author's intent with the book and her criticisms home in on language, content and a view of an anti-feminist stance. On the other hand Kit Spring (2003) responded to Fine's *polemic* by questioning Fine's focus on the *gross bits in the book* at the expense of noting character development and a realistic humour in the book. Spring also notes that any teen boy will be more inclined to read it as a response to Fine's condemnation of its explicit content.

The point here is that neither critic is able to view the book dispassionately nor assess the book objectively. Their comments are driven by personal response overlaid by their own beliefs about what is appropriate for a YA audience to read. Their beliefs are not informed by external criteria and are not tied down to language, character development or narrative in the text. It is a repeated pattern with YA fiction. In some states in America *Forever* (Blume, 1975) is still banned simply on account of the explicit sexual content, despite the fact that the young

couple in the book experiencing their first sexual encounter are both over the legal age of consent. In its fiftieth year, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) also continues to be censored in some states of the USA because of, variously, the stereotypical portrayal of the southern states and black culture, the reference to rape, and the use of the word *nigger.* These criteria seem culture bound and will be re-examined in the literature on gatekeepers.

On the other hand issues-based texts can receive approval simply for narrative themes, particularly in a school context. Teachers will comment that a text is good for teaching about, for example, bullying or the Second World War. However Pinsent (2005) comments on the fact that a writer's prejudice about an issue may be unstated, hidden even from the author itself. The issues may provide some factual information on, for example, sex (*Forever*, Blume, 1975) but the text may require close interrogation in order to discover hidden bias. The presentation of contemporary and highly challenging issues, as perceived by the author at the moment of writing will change as attitudes and perceptions alter with time. An analysis of the literature of war, for example, (Agnew and Fox, 2001), illustrates changing ideologies and perspectives on conflict. Leeson (1985) reflects that the school and Empire literature of the early twentieth century embodies ideals now seen as corrupt. In terms of perceived quality, the issues that affect one generation are likely to be very different from those which affect the following or the preceding generations. *Forever* is on school library shelves in the UK despite being banned in some states in America.

In an article in *The Guardian* Alison Flood (2010) investigated why authors were choosing challenging themes such as suicide and death for a YA audience. She discovered that authors thought that such themes allied to situations that YAs were experiencing for the first time. Authors went on to say that narratives on these topics allowed the young people to engage and experience emotions and situations that were new to them, thus helping them to begin to understand their own individual responses more fully. This is in line with Erikson's (1950) view of teenage years as a time to explore and experiment with new situations; he felt that fiction provides a safe forum for such an exploration of aspects of identity.

Stover (1996) feels that adolescent literature should be at the heart of school literature courses for adolescents in order to:

> *help them begin to question the "reality" they have derived from their limited life experiences and to perceive reality differently, books that will help them break boundaries based on color, culture, and other stereotypes.* (p.86)

Texts which develop ability in the related skills of *reading, interpretation and criticism* (Scholes, 1985, p.21) may lead to the development of an understanding of codes and cultural contexts in which the text was written. However in choosing such texts there is immediately an implicit cultural value; that is the texts chosen will be of their time and will support certain world views for example issues/ cross-curricular / multicultural of that time. Tucker (1984) makes the point that in considering a purpose for children's reading we can consider psychoanalytical benefits (*the safety valve for the individual, p.4)* or the cognitive benefits reading may provide.

The issues raised in fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age range arise out of the perceived needs of the target reader but these are complex and changing in the context of different societies, times and cultures; they are also closely monitored and controlled by the gatekeepers described in 2.8.3. Books which relate to the experiences of 11 – 16 year olds and may engage them with all aspects of reading may also not meet with the approval of the gatekeepers.

2.10.5 Summary of fiction for 11- 16 year olds in a school context

It is evident from the preceding section that there is a tension between official requirements for teaching literature, exemplified in curriculum iterations and in examination syllabi, and any rationale for these same requirements linked to principled pedagogic research; this is a situation reflected internationally. On the other hand the development of the NC in England has been demonstrated to be less responsive to professional and academic initiatives and research. What is notable about the NC in England is the lack of rationale or pedagogy behind it and the continuation of old concepts of best, or quality, literature. Reference to

historical and current research also indicates that this appears to be a long-standing problem which appears to be increasing in England where teachers lack the potential to be autonomous and flexible in their teaching unlike, for example, what is currently the situation in Australia with a new, more flexible curriculum (Goodwyn, 2012a). In terms of the research reported here, CHAT allows an examination of the influences and exigencies of the use of fiction in the classroom, particularly in terms of the influence of community and rules on the choice of tool for a particular externally driven purpose or object.

I will now move to consider definitions of quality in so far as they exist in relation to children's literature. This will build on the preceding examination of other themes: the role of the gatekeepers; the complexity of the notion of the school canon; the educational use and the purpose of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds; and the issues relevant to the adolescent reader.

2.11 Quality

This review of the literature is moving towards attempting to identify what has been defined as quality in fiction for an 11 – 16 year old readership, including fiction specifically defined as Young Adult Literature (YAL) or crossover literature. I have established that there are many gatekeepers of literature for this age group, and a multitude of perceived purposes for fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age group deemed appropriate and suitable for educational use and also for pleasure. In fiction terms, identifying quality in this complex web will appear much as cutting off the Hydra's heads did to Hercules: as we deal with one, two more seem to spring up.

The word quality, as both noun and adjective, is a frequently used shorthand in both academic and popular writing to express some more indefinable attribute. This is as true in education as it is in life in general. Witness the sports commentator's: *That pass was real quality.* A dictionary definition of *Quality* is:

> ***n*** *grade of goodness; excellence; that which makes it a thing; what it is; nature; character; kind; property attribute; social status; high social status; persons of then upper class collectively; profession; accomplishment…;* ***adj*** *of a high grade of excellence. (Chambers, 2008)*

Goodness or *excellence* as definitions take us no closer to identifying with precision what is meant by quality. In research conducted for the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA), Cremin (2009) asked teachers to identify six 'good' children's writers. In this instance she explains that the term good was used *referring to writers whose work teachers had found both valuable and successful*… (Chapter 16, p.206) in this case, for primary children. It is apparent that the definition of *good* begs further definition: how are we to understand *valuable* and *successful*? In whose terms? Wherein lies value? Successful for whom? This small example illustrates the problem inherent in using essentially subjective definitions as a basis for objective professional criteria.

> *The bookshops are crammed with children's titles, but where is the quality in all that quantity?* Rabinovitch (2004)

At first glance this quotation from Dina Rabinovitch, late children's literature critic on The Guardian, seems a clear cri de coeur. However it is not that simple. I mention that she was a children's literature critic, because this is a relatively new field (Sarland, 1999) but also because she wrote for The Guardian implying a certain ideology. She was also a mother of teenagers. So what were her criteria for quality? Unfortunately she does not explain this!

Quality is also often defined by how the book can be used in school perhaps harking back to Sumara's (2001) view of the closed school canonical text. Reflecting on parents' choices of books to read with young children, Wilkinson (2003) writes of the *subjective and idiosyncratic interaction child has with a book* (p.297) which in itself may be an indicator of quality. On the other hand, does the quality lie in the content or the nature of the experience? (Appleyard, 1991) cites the adolescents' search for identification with characters, realism, and books

which make them think. This generally implies contemporary texts which address familiar problems.

Research in NZ (TLRI, 2009), drawing on previous research and interviews with teachers, produced a definition of a literary text in the following terms:

> *A literary text is characterised by the following qualities:*
>
> - *the use of language to please, where the aesthetic function is primary and draws attention to itself*
> - *a focus on formal organisation and coherence*
> - *the evocation of a fictive or imaginary world which exists in a tangential relationship to the experiential world, and about which the work constitutes a kind of moral statement. (p.149)*

This allows a text to be considered in relation to its aesthetic, structural, narrative and moral functions. It is an interesting approach yet still begs the question of how the generalities of aesthetic qualities, formal organisation and moral statement may be interpreted.

Similarly the Australian Curriculum for English (2011) has a broader interpretation of appropriate texts for study, and indeed includes multimedia texts as well as printed versions:

> *'Literary texts' refers to past and present texts across a range of cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value. While the nature of what constitutes 'literary texts' is dynamic and evolving, they are seen as having personal, social, cultural and aesthetic appeal and potential for enriching students' scope of experience. 'Literary texts' include a broad range of forms such as novels, poetry, short stories, plays, fiction, multimodal texts such as film, and non-fiction*. (p.6)

The key points here are both the acknowledgement of the dynamic and evolving interpretation of literary texts but also the linking of the varied fields of appeal with a specific mention of these appeals having the potential to enhance the pupils' experience: starting where they are. This is also reminiscent of what Scholes

(1985) wanted text to do for students. In the Australian curriculum the responsibility for choice is firmly with the teachers, who are at the heart of this. It is emphasised that the list of example texts is not prescriptive but meant to stimulate thinking. Teacher autonomy is indicated in the rubric which states: *Teachers may select whole texts and/or parts of texts depending on units of study, cohorts and level of difficulty* (p. 7).

Whilst the list of recommended texts for the USA Core Standards (2010) is lengthy, it too is simply there to exemplify the textual range and complexity that children should experience at each school stage:

> *The following text samples primarily serve to exemplify the level of complexity and quality that the Standards require all students in a given grade band to engage with. Additionally, they are suggestive of the breadth of texts that students should encounter in the text types required by the Standards. The choices should serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality, and range for their own classrooms. They expressly do not represent a partial or complete reading list.* (p.2)

Just as in the Australian Curriculum the teacher, or educator, is given the responsibility of choosing texts that will best serve in their own classrooms.

The American, the Australian and the New Zealand curricula indicate that there are alternative, more open approaches than that represented by the NC for English in England. This also demonstrates that quality may link to educational purposes and an actual group of students rather than being a decontextualized and general descriptor.

2.12 Conclusion

From this review of the Literature it emerges that criteria for interpreting what can be judged as quality in fiction deemed suitable for the 11 – 16 year old age group remain obscure. It is evident that this has always been problematic when we look at historical precedence. Whilst attitudes of teachers towards fiction for the 11 –

16 year old age group and preferences of the 11 – 16 year old students in what they read would appear to be key, these are generally not considered of prime importance by policy makers and those who construct the curriculum. There appears to be no underlying rationale, linked to pedagogy, for the inclusion of literature in the curriculum or for the texts recommended. Benton (2000), deploring the pervasive effect of the canon in school, has stated that we should trust *the professionalism of teachers* in choosing appropriate texts to use with students in the UK secondary classroom. This is a recurrent theme (Sumara, 2001, 2006; Fleming et al, 2001); however the reasons why teachers choose texts has equally been shown to be dependent on reasons beyond perceived literary merit and children's developmental needs but potentially linked to curriculum expediency or examination imperatives (Fleming et al, 2001; Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999; Goodwyn, 2012a; Westbrook, 2013; Bodman, Taylor, Morris, 2012).

Whilst there has been a plethora of research into what children read (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 1995; Hall and Coles, 1999; Reading Connects, 2008), there has been no sustained research into how to define quality in fiction for young people. Definitions of quality are generally related to curriculum requirements and perceptions of the canon in a literary heritage model. However quality is frequently referred to as a criterion for determining appropriate fiction for all children, and particularly the 11 – 16 year old age group to read in and out of the classroom context. Research has shown what children read but has not explored their views of quality in terms of what they read.

Much has been written about the importance of young people reading books and the potential benefits to them from engagement with quality fiction in school and beyond. This perceived importance underpins curricular initiatives for the teaching of English not just in England but in the USA, Australia and New Zealand too. It also forms a significant part of the GCSE Examination in English and English Literature. There are many views on what is *quality* but little or no research into how this impacts on pedagogy.

This research was designed to explore that gap in the research by seeking the views of teachers and young people from 11 – 16 years old about what they considered to be quality on fiction for this age group. In so doing I aim to reconsider the pedagogy underlying the requirement to encourage 11 – 16 year olds to read fiction considered quality, how to identify such works and how to develop a discriminating love of reading through the curriculum, where assessment issues may predominate. It is therefore time to consider the impact of government, press and other opinions on what is meant by quality on the 11 – 16 year olds and teachers who are the subjects of this rhetoric. The identified gaps in the literature, which I have just delineated, led to the research questions for this study:

What does *quality* mean when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?

This question was addressed through related sub questions:

1. What does *quality* mean to teachers when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?
2. What does *quality* mean to secondary school students (11 – 16 years old) in their reading choices?
3. What are the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perspectives on quality?
4. What might be the implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching literature of *quality*?

In the next section I describe the methods by which I investigated these aspects of quality and the methodological paradigms and the theoretical context within which the research was placed. The research focuses on the voices of the teachers and the students themselves. This research builds, too, on the notion of starting where the child is (Hall and Coles, 1999; et al) thus giving the young people a voice too.

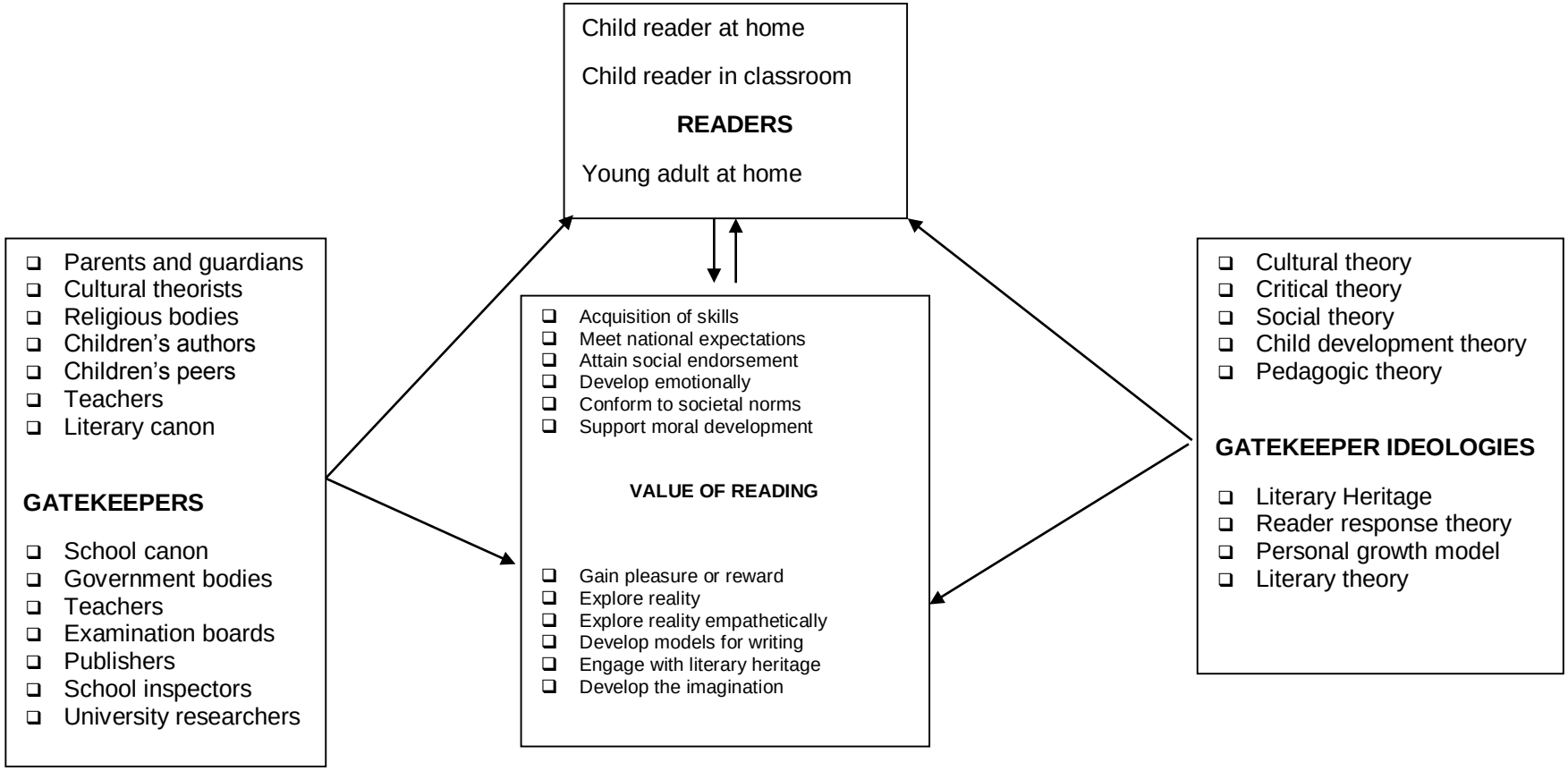

Table 2:1. Summary of Review of the Literature

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the Review of the Literature revealed that there has been continued interest in what 11 – 16 year olds read both for pleasure and for educational purposes. This interest has been manifested in the extensive research over the last 70 years into what children read (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 1995; Hall and Coles, 1999; Reading Connects, 2008), which was examined in the previous chapter. In addition a reading of relevant professional documents such as the NC (2008) also revealed that *quality* occurs frequently in official references (ibid) to the reading of 11 – 16 year olds but that there is no definition of precisely what is meant by *quality,* merely a tacit assumption of a common understanding between professionals of what quality means. Notions of a *school canon* (Benton, 2000) relate closely to assumptions of *quality* and indicate that interpretations of what is valuable for young people to read both at home and at school are rooted in a classical tradition of literature and an approach to literature arising from Leavis (1943).

Whilst both teachers and young people have been surveyed widely on children's reading, my research was designed to address the gap identified: namely what teachers and their students value as *quality* in books for the 11- 16 year old age group and what they mean when they refer to quality. The Review of Literature also explored books written specifically for young people in the 11-16 age group, including YA literature (Trites, 2000), and concluded that this age group read a range of books at home and in school. Thus this research addresses the complete range of the fiction that 11 – 16 year olds read, at home and at school, in looking at definitions of *quality*. In looking at the whole range of fiction available I have been mindful of research eg (Sarland, 1994; Zipes, 2001) which establishes that children enjoy fiction series, such as *Point Horror* or *Sweet Twins*, often seen as inferior and lacking in educational value but that such reading also enables children to learn literary skills as well as pleasure in the act of reading.

Thus my research question is: **What does *quality* mean when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?**

This question was addressed through four related sub questions:

1. What does *quality* mean to teachers when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?
2. What does *quality* mean to secondary school students (11 – 16 years old) in their reading choices?
3. What are the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perspectives on quality?
4. What might be the implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching *good* literature?

The research questions were addressed firstly through questionnaires for teachers only (Appendix 3), sent to English departments in 118 secondary schools in the South West of England and secondly through semi-structured interviews with individual teachers and groups of students in the 11 – 16 year old age range. Teachers who completed the questionnaires taught in both KS3 and KS4 and the students were representative of both KS3 and KS4. The samples of both students and teachers were convenience samples selected from teachers who had volunteered to contribute more fully to the research project when answering the questionnaires and the students from schools at which the volunteering teachers taught. The answers from the questionnaire both contributed to the development of the structured interview schedules and also provided a background against which to consider the meaning of the data gathered through interview providing added reliability (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

3.2 Research paradigms

Pring (2000) writes of the suspicion with which educational research can be viewed. He highlights the problem that educational research needs to be

understood by the non-research community who are also integral to the processes of developing educational theory and practice (*politicians, administrators and teachers* (p.4) in order for it to have impact. Ways of facilitating that understanding include explaining actions and predicting future effects and possible changes. There is a tension between investigating the highly complex social situation represented by the term ***education,*** and making the outcomes of that same research both understandable and applicable. With reference to this, Pring (2000) considers the opposing theories of truth: how understanding the social world gives the possibility of changing the facts about that same social world:

> *Realism and accounts of reality and truth are inseparable, and failure to recognise that leads to strange and indefensible practices in the theory and practice of research.* (p.74)

He sees the lines of quantitative and qualitative research as being mutually illuminating rather than mutually exclusive as paradigms.

Crotty (1998) also rejects the notion of the researcher beginning research by situating it within a particular paradigm as a starting point. He notes that the researcher should not begin investigating a problem from a particular theoretical or ontological standpoint. Rather, Crotty (1998) suggests that the researcher begins with *a real-life issue that needs to be addressed* (p.13) and from that issue and its attendant objectives emerge or develop appropriate theoretical frameworks, methodologies and methods in which to situate the research. As Pring (2000), Crotty sees a divide between quantitative and qualitative research occurring at the level of methods, not the epistemological or theoretical level. He denotes (p.5) the choices for the research model at each stage in the construction of the research model from the original problem through epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. I was mindful of this in designing the study reported here.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) offer a clear cut distinction between the positivist approach, where the positivist research design constructs a research project within a scientific and objective or experimental model, and the

interpretive approach which *describes and explains human behaviour* (p.5). They cite Habermas (1972) and his tripartite model of research which effectively encompasses both positivist and interpretive strands in addressing *three cognitive interests:*

1. *Prediction and control*
2. *Understanding and interpretation*
3. *Emancipation and freedom* (p.29)

which Habermas summarises as *technical, practical and emancipatory* and which can be seen as firstly positivist, secondly as interpretivist and finally a combination of the two theoretical stances.

A positivist approach to research is suited to fields where an absolute truth is an ideal: this applies particularly to scientific or, for example, medical models. Exploring issues of quality will inevitably invite positivist responses. However these will be explored in this study within an interpretative framework. The purpose is not to be able to tabulate and enumerate criteria of quality but to gain an overview of key areas to consider. From this will emerge an interpretive based theory to inform and deepen understanding of the purposes of the reading of fiction for young people but also to inform how this understanding can contribute to developing the choices of fiction available to 11 – 16 year olds at curriculum, institution and familial level.

For Carr and Kemmis (1986), the problem with the positivist approach in educational research is the reliance on scientific approaches to investigate and analyse the vagaries of the social phenomenon which is education. The interpretive paradigm means observing and explaining human behaviour in the context of a cultural and historical context. Any analysis of such behaviour will be subjective and bounded by the social and cultural influences on both participant and researcher. Thus any research into human actions and behaviours needs to be interpreted and given meaning rather than reduced to the *causal interpretations* (p.89) of positivism. Carr and Kemmis (1986), note that *clarifying the meanings individuals give to their actions* (p.97) enables groups to communicate and thus provide the possibility of change. This seems in line with

Pring's (2000) statement of the importance of understanding the social world in order to bring about change.

3.2.1 Choice of paradigm for this research

In any research it is important to be open to the paradigm most suited not just to the proposed research but also to the participants, the context in which it is set and ultimately to the audience to which it will be disseminated. However this also means ensuring that research is conducted in an ethical manner with due academic freedom and free of influence from any sponsors (Pring, 2000). It also means recognising that there can be a blurring between the paradigms yet remaining cognisant of and open to the complexity of models of research.

Bearing in mind Pring's (2000) caveat, my research is set within the interpretive paradigm. I propose to examine how my research design aligns with the theoretical frameworks I have chosen, moving from epistemology to theoretical perspectives to methodology and finally expounding the precise details of the research design itself. Whilst Crotty (1998) notes that there can be tendency to consider ontological and epistemological issues together, I propose to consider ontology first where ontological beliefs *concern the nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.5) that is, what exists. It seems axiomatic that epistomology, knowing about what exists, follows on from ontology. *Cogito ergo sum* Descartes (1644) still epitomises the challenge of absolute knowledge and indeed of proving absolute truths; this is the essence of interpretive research.

3.3 Ontological beliefs

The research reported in this thesis arose from my own philosophical perspective which sees reality as multiple and not providing a fixed answer to a problem. The research itself can also only reflect a moment in time – a snapshot. Thus the usage of the term *quality* and *interpreting* with more precision what quality might mean, in relation to fiction for the 11- 16 year old age range, was itself the focus

of the study. There are multiple realities in the usage of the word quality and interpretations are equally multifaceted, Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) *multiple realities* of interpretive research. The defining of *quality* is essentially subjective and dependent on the perspective of an individual, or group of individuals, in turn influenced by their own cultural, historical, social and political backgrounds and the context in which they live, think and operate. There is unlikely to be an absolute, scientific or positivist truth; rather a creation of a new reality. Whilst it is commonplace in many fields (education, medicine, business…) to find criteria which attempt to define aspects of quality, nevertheless interpretation of such criteria is likely to remain a highly personal process, rooted in individual ontological assumptions. However *quality* has become a portmanteau shorthand term to imply worth and value in whatever is being thus described. Its use implies a shared and common understanding of an imprecise term and can militate against any further unravelling of what that shared understanding might be. I am, therefore, concerned with examining social beliefs which are in themselves socially constructed, individually experienced and given meaning through the medium of language.

Guba and Lincoln (2005) create a line for constructivist research that defines ontology: *as Relativism local and specific constructed and co-constructed realities* (p.98). This means that how we interpret matters is simply the way we interpret them and not an absolute truth; in contrast to what may be seen as the positivist standpoint. Pring (2000) describes the problem of achieving absolute truth and the necessity to construct meanings and *frameworks through which the experience is sieved and made intelligible* (p.46). It is important to be willing to negotiate each person's ideas and participate in the formation of new understanding. As participant researcher I will also need to be cognisant that my own beliefs may also have impacted on the discourse of the interviews.

3.4 Epistemology

Crotty (1998) posits that defining the epistemology of a research project gives it *a philosophical grounding* (p.8). Drawing on themes from Pring (2000), Carr and

Kemmis (1986), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), Zuber-Skerritt (1996) and Crotty (1998), I have situated this research within the *constructionist* paradigm (Crotty, (1998) where meaning is not *discovered* but *constructed*. This is also referred to by Guba and Lincoln (2005) who propose that the epistemology within the constructionist paradigm is *Transactional* and *subjectivist* with *created findings* (p.98); an interpretation rather than a snapshot in time. Whilst, arguably, any meaning will be ultimately constructed through findings from research, philosophically, the meaning I construct through this research will be the result of my interpretation of the data and will not conform to the positivist expectation to be generalizable and reproducible.

Thus the interpretive paradigm is an appropriate paradigm for this research since the constructionist approach looks to construct knowledge from data, not prove it scientifically. There is no assumption of one answer and this approach is rooted in an inherent belief that a single event or phenomenon may be open to different interpretations. The principles underpinning the constructionist paradigm lie in a belief that reality is socially constructed and subjectively based, influenced by cultural, social and historical aspects. Such interpretations are also equally likely to be time, socially or culturally dependent. Research within the constructionist paradigm is interpretive; the researcher seeks to come to an understanding of how people themselves understand and present particular events or principles. However the researcher's role is of the disinterested observer who seeks to enquire and interpret and is *disinterested* only in the sense of maintaining a stance of neutrality to the data. Both disinterest and neutrality are complex positions for the researcher to uphold when working within a known community; however it is important at all times for the researcher to be aware of any potential influences on their research approaches or interpretation of the data.

There are also links in this research to a further paradigm identified by Carr and Kemmis (1986) which, in addition to the positivistic and interpretive, derives from critical theory. Here we are concerned with the distribution of power among social and political groups. I am researching a social, political and educational situation in which there are uneven distributions of power and advantage. The NC for English (2008) in England has imposed a prescriptive reading list, a literary

canon, for use in school, on teachers who in turn have imposed this upon relatively powerless pupils. Parents have in recent years come to prominence as consumers in terms of their children's education and may also act as *gatekeepers* to children's reading. However parents are equally powerless in relation to the NC and its imposition within the State Education system and the examination syllabi. The theory identified by Carr and Kemmis seeks to use criticality to challenge and change. My research is a small scale interpretive study with, perhaps, limited potential to create change per se. However the findings themselves will have the potential to contribute to debates challenging current policies and thus to contribute to change.

Beyond the potential for this research to contribute to debates on policies there are further possibilities for impact. Although there are unlikely to be profound theoretical advances in knowledge resulting from this study my research does, however, aim to illuminate understandings of how literature and reading are perceived in terms of an 11 – 16 year old's education. In turn, evidence from the findings has the potential to enhance curriculum opportunities by adding research evidence to contribute to discussions about curriculum and examination requirements related to the reading of 11 – 16 year olds.

3.5 Research Methodology

Crotty (1998) sees the selection of a research methodology as the natural progression from the choice of epistemological paradigm in which to situate the research. Having selected a constructionist epistemology as most appropriate both to the tenor of the research and to my own philosophical beliefs, the research methodologies were chosen from within the interpretivist paradigm. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2007) cite Oakley (1999) in noting that *Paradigms are essentially intellectual cultures* (p.59). Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that *hermeneutical* and *dialectical* (p.98) methodologies are best suited to a constructionist ontology and an epistemology leading to interpreted findings. This implies being open to interpreting and understanding and through interpretation seeing a wider picture; that is reaching a consensus of opinion through a

dialectical process of challenge and counter challenge, a process which has its roots in Aristotelian tradition.

Crotty (1998) also notes that the planning of research often arises from a problem or *real life issue* (p.13). The choice of appropriate strategies for investigating the identified issue will often lead to the eventual selection of a methodology and methods for the particular proposed research project which, in turn, need to be congruent with the epistemology and the ontology within which the research is situated. That this methodology needs to be strong and robust, yet crafted from several elements to fit the unique situation of the research is underlined by Crotty's reference to the need to *forge a methodology* (p.14). Crotty also notes that because each *piece of research is unique* it will demands its own *unique methodology* (p.14). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) further explain this by indicating that the choice of instruments for the research depend on the methodology chosen for the research.

Crotty (1998) includes *Survey research, Grounded theory, Discourse analysis and Phenomenological research* (p.5) under methodologies which may apply to a range of epistemological and theoretical perspectives; these four research approaches fit most closely to interpretive research and the data needed for the researcher trying to understand and make sense of an issue within a constructionist epistemology. Additionally Creswell (2003) positions grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research and narrative research (p.14 - 15) as appropriate strategies, or methodologies, for qualitative research.

Bearing in mind Crotty's (1998) assertion that a methodology will be forged to suit the unique nature of the research, the project reported here draws on more than one methodology. This study encompasses aspects of phenomenology in terms of the size of the sample, a small number; in the desire *to develop patterns and relationships of meaning* (Creswell, 2003, p.15) whilst looking to *reveal the understandings and perceptions of the subjects of research* (Pring, 2000, p.32); and in the object for the researcher to *bracket,* put a*side,* their own experiences to minimise researcher impact on the data. Similarly for (Crotty, 1998) a phenomenological approach requires the researcher to put aside preconceptions

and revisit the phenomena to allow new meaning to emerge or develop understanding of an earlier perceived significance. However where a phenomenological methodology may well aim to collect unstructured data in order to more fully experience the point of view of the subjects of the research, this project used both open (unstructured) and semi-structured questions.

In terms of data this study also uses grounded theory approaches. Data were generated through seeking the views of the participants in the research. Data analysis was in *multiple stages* (Creswell, 2007, p.14) where emerging categories were continually refined and compared.

Arguably the study also draws on elements of Case study in that it investigates an activity (the use of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds) in detail through a variety of data collection methods including semi-structured interviews. However this project was not conducted over a sustained *period of time*, a particular feature of case study noted by Stake (1995).

This project, then, was *forged* from aspects of phenomenology, grounded theory and case study; I have chosen to refer to it as a small scale interpretive study to situate it within the interpretive paradigm but also to indicate a uniqueness of a research response to a unique research issue. In the next section I consider how the chosen methodological approaches led to the specific research methods which informed this project.

3.6 Research Methods

Research methodologies within a constructionist paradigm will involve umbrella approaches to a choice of methods which allow data collection which can be interrogated and interpreted; that is not the causal attribution of objective facts from data, which is a hallmark of positivism. For such interpretive research it is important to gather rich data around the research question. Referring to Crotty (1998), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), Creswell (2003) it is apparent that it is broadly accepted that interviews represent such appropriate rich data. Data

from interviews are open to interpretation; and will not be immediately quantifiable since interview responses represent individual opinion arising from individual belief systems. In the constructionist paradigm *Meaning is not discovered but constructed* (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Data need to be rich and varied. However the corollary is that data will be gathered in a particular time and setting and bounded by particular institutional demands and frameworks. Giddens (1993) refers to the double hermeneutic of social science research and this is also referred to by Crotty (1998). This implies that the researcher has to be a knowing participant in the social world, using the language and terms of reference of the research subjects, and then reinterpret the knowledge in an academic sense.

I have already shown how Crotty (1998) demonstrates that research needs to be situated within an epistemology, have clear theoretical perspectives and an underpinning methodology. I have explained that my research is within the constructionist epistemology and with an interpretivist theoretical perspective. I am, however, also mindful of Pring's (2000) caveat of drawing *too sharp a contrast between different kinds of activity or different kinds of enquiry* (p.43); by this he means drawing too sharp a division between qualitative and quantitative methods in research. Crotty (1998) offers a variety of research methods for consideration. Whilst some methods are clearly positivist and thus quantitative in approach *Experiments, sampling and measuring, statistical analysis*. (p.5), other methods may serve a dual function and give data that may be both quantitative and qualitative (for example, questionnaires or observations). Denscombe (2003) notes the distinction between *qualitative and quantitative methods, quantitative and qualitative data sets, and quantitative and qualitative research* (p.138) and sees all of these as potentially mixed methods approaches. He adds that:

> *treating quantitative and qualitative approaches as incompatible opposites when it comes to research that it is neither helpful nor realistic* (p.138)

I was aware that using questionnaires might yield data that could be interpreted through both quantitative and qualitative analysis; however I considered that this was a potential strength rather than theoretical weakness. Creswell (2003) refers

to the process whereby qualitative data are analysed quantitatively as *data only transformation* (p.220).

Nevertheless, setting this research project within the interpretive paradigm affected the choice of research methods for the project. A multi–method approach which included the use of questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments, allowed multiple perspectives to be explored. In the sections on Questionnaires (*3.7.1*) and on Interviews (*3.7.2*). I further explore the significance of these instruments as methods of data collection. The aim of research within this paradigm is to construct meaning from the world around in the certain knowledge that there will be no one, true answer. However it is important to be open to new interpretations, not to be trammelled by pre-conception or earlier interpretations. The constructionist paradigm encourages the researcher to move beyond the conventional interpretations and to be open to new, richer and alternative understandings.

3.6.1 Previous research in the field of the reading of young people

In my Review of the Literature in the previous chapter, I noted that there had been a number of surveys into what children read over the last 60 years in England (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 1995; Hall and Coles, 1999; National Literacy Trust, 2008). However these surveys looked at magazines and other forms of reading as well as just books of fiction; indeed Hall and Coles, even as early as 1999, asked about computer use, though not television viewing. The main research instruments in each of these surveys were questionnaires with follow up interviews. Jenkinson, Whitehead, Hall and Coles and the Reading Connects project all had a research model which began with very extensive questionnaires of children and their reading habits.

Jenkinson surveyed children of secondary age (11 – 16), and Whitehead cited a limitation in Jenkinson's work in the fact that most of the schools used by Jenkinson were in an urban area with a predominance of selective schools; Jenkinson's survey was also limited to Hull, Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. Jenkinson analysed nearly 3000 questionnaires and Reading

Connects over 8000, although Reading Connects drew on a national sample. Benton surveyed a smaller sample, around 700 children, and limited his research to his local county. Whitehead and Hall and Coles each received questionnaire data from around 8000 children too and their sample was also drawn nationally; indeed the Hall and Coles research was designed to replicate Whitehead's research. Whitehead also sent a school questionnaire looking at provision for reading in the school and the teachers' professional attitudes to reading.

Whitehead and Hall and Coles both used follow-up interviews to illuminate the findings from the respective questionnaire data; a multi method approach. In Whitehead's research these interviews were designed to be informal, with the interviewer following up on the answers given on the questionnaires; Whitehead also interviewed a range of age groups (10+, 11+, 13+ and 15+) and in a cross-section of schools. Hall and Coles used a detailed, semi-structured interview schedule and interviewed 87 children in 6 regions in England. In the interviews they included questions about the impact of television and films on reading habits.

3.6.2 Relating previous research projects to my research design

My reading of the literature had revealed extensive surveys on what reading material 11 – 16 year olds choose and how extensively they read. However I had identified a gap in the literature relating to teachers' ideas about their students' reading. It was also apparent that, since Sarland (1994) and Benton (1995a), there had been little systematic research into what 11 – 16 year olds thought about the books they read, although, of course, this is part of the work of Hall and Coles and of Reading Connects. I was also very aware, in my role as a former teacher and a PGCE trainer of secondary English teachers, of the impact of NC and examination imperatives on the use of fiction in the secondary English classroom. Alongside this was an awareness of a general perception and concern that young people in the 11 – 16 year old age range, and boys in particular (Love and Hamston, 2003; OECD, 2003), were reading fiction less than they used to.

I had already done a small scale study into the reading preferences of 11 – 16 year olds (Hopper, 2005, 2006). The study was based in the South West of

England and allowed 30 PGCE trainees to look at what their pupils read as part of their own induction into using fiction in the secondary classroom. This study looked at data from 707 pupils and, similarly to previous surveys detailed above, looked primarily at 11 – 16 year olds' patterns of reading.

My previous study (Hopper, 2005, 2006) built on findings from previous surveys about young people's book choices and their fiction author preferences; it also investigated reading beyond fiction and patterns of reading. However it was becoming increasingly apparent to myself and my trainee English teachers that 11 – 16 year olds did not always enjoy books on the curriculum or the books deemed *good* for them to read. In other words there were questions about curriculum imperatives and the whole notion of the school canon (Benton, 2000; et al). The vagueness of the much used word *quality,* in curriculum terms, seemed to be the crux.

Whilst there was a challenge in trying to investigate something as amorphous as the meaning of a single word, even when linked to a tradition of literature, this seemed an avenue worth exploring, especially with the prevalence of the use of this word, *quality*, in terms of the curriculum and in judgements passed on books written for young people. There were many approaches I could have taken, however it seemed important to design a research project which sought the opinions of both teachers and the young readers (11 – 16 year olds) since *quality* of reading material is such a prevalent curriculum preoccupation.

The views of the young readers about what they read, as I have demonstrated in this and the previous chapter, have been presented in a succession of studies over the last 60 years. However, I wanted to explore in more detail what 11 – 16 year olds enjoyed reading at home and at school and what aspects of story they valued. Whilst earlier studies have surveyed children in both the primary and the secondary sector, I wanted this study to focus on the 11 – 16 year olds, effectively KS3 and KS4 in curriculum terms in the UK. This linked both to my own experience as a teacher at KS3 and KS4 and a secondary trainer of PGCE English teachers. The surveys I have already referred to all note a falling off in enthusiasm for reading as children reach the teenage years, so, by focusing on

the 11 – 16 year olds, my research would seek to illuminate issues surrounding this as well.

In addition, with Goodwyn and Findlay's (1999) research in mind, I also wanted to give teachers a voice to say what they valued in fiction for the pupils they taught, again for use in school and for reading for pleasure. Were they able to use a variety of fiction texts? Were their models to teaching fiction essentially Cultural Heritage, literary models (for example, Personal Growth) or based in theories such as Reader Response? Or were approaches when introducing pupils to fiction texts based in other models or literary theories? I also wanted to find out how teachers used the texts they chose in the classroom curriculum since the emphasis on texts of quality is a curriculum expectation (NC, 2008).

3.6.3 Designing the research

In designing my research I planned to build on previous successful models (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 1995; Hall and Coles, 1999; Reading Connects, 2008) but I intended to plan more opportunities for the teachers and students to describe what aspects of fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age range mattered to them. I aimed to explore through interview *the many subtle nuances of an unfamiliar perspective* (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996, p.16) and through this shed new light on a familiar area of research. I hoped that, through the process of interviewing, I might raise *unexpected lines of enquiry* (Grix, 2004, p.127) to illuminate my enquiry.

Thus I planned to begin with a questionnaire sent out to English departments in schools in the PGCE secondary Partnership of the University of Exeter; these were all in the South West of England. This allied with approaches in earlier research and although not national in scope, was similar to samples used by Jenkinson (1946) and Benton (1995). The questionnaires would be used to inform interviews with volunteer teachers. Unlike Whitehead (1977) and Hall and Coles (1999), where interviews were from a planned random sample, my interviews with teachers and groups of students would be *convenience samples*

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Using volunteers was also more appropriate within the ethical context of this research.

3.7 Research design and methods

I shall now consider some fundamental questions concerning the design of my research. These relate to the design of the whole project but they also have specific reference to my choice of research methods. The research is set within the interpretive paradigm (Cohen and Manion, 2000; Dockrell and Hamilton, 1980) and the nature of the knowledge I was looking at was attitudes to quality of fiction for 11 – 16 year old age range. This knowledge is essentially subjective in the sense that it is held in the minds of the subjects of the research. The realities which I investigated are the mental constructions of these participants. Setting this research in the interpretive paradigm, data were therefore gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was designed for use in the first phase of the research (Appendix 3). Pring (2000) notes the value in using a survey approach (the questionnaire) when the researcher wishes to gain a good deal of information from a large number of participants. Denscombe (2003) notes the benefits of the use of the questionnaire in obtaining an *exploratory sample* (p.41). Denscombe again notes the convenience of using the post to distribute and collect questionnaires but adds the caveat that the number of returns are likely to be small when using this method of distribution and collection.

This same point relating to the dissemination of questionnaires is made by Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006) who also detail the types of question which may be used in a questionnaire: *quantity or information, category, list or multiple choice, scale, ranking, complex grid or scale or open-ended* (p.179). Blaxter, Hughes and Tight explain that the types of questions: *may be combined in a various ways questionnaire to give questions of increasing complexity* (p.179).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) show that there are many ways of constructing a questionnaire from *highly structured to unstructured* (p.248). Sapsford and Jupp (1996) validate the questionnaire as a complex and structured research instrument of value in a project: *Questionnaires are as much highly structured methods of data collection as are interview schedules* (p.102).

Such questionnaires will provide a range of initial information which may lend itself to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Munn and Drever (1999) concur in the value of questionnaires in gathering initial information. Munn and Drever also note that anonymity is a potential advantage of the questionnaire. However they do remind us that the information given in a questionnaire, even from open-ended questions is likely to be more descriptive without the presence of the researcher to tease out information.

In order for the questionnaire to be purposeful and useful it is important for the researcher to have a clear idea of the purpose of the questionnaire (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Munn and Drever, 1999). It is also important, referring again to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) and also Sapsford and Jupp (1996), to structure questions with great care. It is important to exclude, as far as possible researcher bias in questions (Pring, 2000). It is also necessary to remember that when combining a variety of question types (Denscombe, 2003), the researcher must be mindful of the limitations of each type of question too. Where *closed questions may prescribe the range of responses* (p.248), multiple choice, rating scales and dichotomous questions may provide a broader range of information which is simultaneously easier to code and analyse (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Whilst open questions allow the participants to provide fuller responses, these same responses will, conversely, be more complicated and time-consuming to analyse and code. Grix (2004), however, adds that whilst the questionnaire avoids the interviewer bias effect of interviews, nevertheless clear instructions are needed for the questionnaire to be successful since the researcher is not present to explain areas of misunderstanding.

3.7.2 Interviews

Grix (2004) commends combining the questionnaire with the interview; he also notes the importance of using more than one data collection method in a research project. Whilst the questionnaire may provide a large amount of data, in a number of different forms (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000), the interview allows a more in depth exploration of a topic. Kvale (1996) calls it *a professional conversation* (p.5) and he goes on to amplify this description by defining it as a conversation that has *structure and purpose* (p.6); Pring (2000) describes the interview *conversation* as one where meaning is *negotiated* by the participants. Kvale also reminds us that the interview is a deceptively simple instrument and that there are both practical and methodological pitfalls that the researcher needs to consider.

The interview mode for qualitative research is often the semi-structured interview (Kvale, 1996; Pring, 2000). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) record that the qualitative interview permits *flexibility rather than fixity of sequence of discussions* (p.146 – 7); this is particularly true of the semi-structured interview where the interviewer is able to respond to *digressions* and include *new avenues* of enquiry Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.146). Similarly Grix (2004) notes that the semi-structured interview allows for *the pursuit of unexpected lines of enquiry* (p.127). This means that the interviewer can encompass the unexpected, reinforcing the idea of a professional conversation. The use of semi-structured interviews is also appropriate for interviews within the interpretative paradigm. Pring (2000) reminds us that in the semi–structured interview *the individual's consciousness and intentions* are important factors in explaining reasons for why things are as they are. Qualitative research aims to derive theory *from interaction with participants* (Cresswell, 2003, p.14).

To return to Kvale's caveats regarding the research interview. A key element for success of the semi-structured interview is preparation. Whilst the semi-structured interview may be framed as a professional conversation, nevertheless the interviewer needs to be sensitive to a power balance (Creswell, 2007) and create an *appropriate atmosphere* (p.279) where the participant feels secure

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). It is important that the participant is fully aware of the aims and purposes of the interview. Above all it is important that questions are carefully prepared.

Kvale (1996) writes of nine types of questions which may be used in the semi-structured interview: *Introducing questions; Follow-up questions; Probing questions; Specifying questions; Direct Questions; Indirect Questions; Structuring Questions; Silence; Interpreting Questions* (p.133). Kvale notes the importance of the interviewer listening, not being just bounded by either schedule or the researcher's own preconceptions and indeed research preoccupations; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006) also draw attention to the complexity of the researcher really listening to what the participant is saying; Pring (2000) gives weight to the complexity of listening by highlighting the problems implicit in crossing the gap between the interviewer's own unique belief system and that of the interviewee to create a new and valid understanding. However the face to face nature of the interview allows some checking as the interview progresses – the *Interpreting Questions* (Kvale, 2006). I also expected considerable diversity in my participants' responses.

Clearly there are multiple philosophical, instrumental and transactional problems in constructing and enacting an effective and valid semi-structured interview. Nevertheless it is also important to be cognisant of the attendant practical pitfalls in research interviewing; lack of attention to any of these can lead to compromised data and it is important to be practically as well as philosophically prepared when interviewing. Problems cited include an appropriate space for the interview; being well prepared with any equipment (positioning microphones; having spare batteries and backup tapes or disks…); being clear from the very first proposal of the interview about how much time the interview will take; being willing to adapt to the participant's circumstances, however inconvenient to the researcher; unexpected reactions from the participant (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Creswell, 2007). Whilst many of these potential problems are operational, nevertheless preparing for an interview to go as smoothly as possible can certainly go somewhere to

making sure the data from the interview will not be adversely influenced by external conditions.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) note that group interviews can be very helpful where the groups have a *common purpose* (p.286) or are used to working together. Cohen, Manion and Morrison also posit that group interviews with children can reduce fear of the interview situation and indeed lead to stimulating discussion with children *challenging*, extending *discussion* and *introducing new ideas* in response to discussion. Indeed Cohen and Manion offer some evidence that group interviews produce a more extensive range of views. Cohen, Manion and Morrison also point out the advantages in terms of saving time and reducing disruption in interviewing groups. Creswell (2007) concurs with this but adds the warning that it may be necessary to actively encourage all members of the group to contribute. In addition to Creswell's caveat, Kvale (1996), whilst also seeing advantages in group interviews, points out the disadvantage to the interviewer in that they may have less overall control of the direction of the interview and that the multiplicity of voices may lead to confusion and difficulties with transcription.

It is almost universally recommended (Grix, 2004; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006; Creswell, 2007) that interviews be recorded and then transcribed in preference to trying to take notes of interviews. However all are mindful of the time needed to transcribe recorded interviews; none see this as any easy option.

The interview is an instrument by which data may be elicited for coding, analysis and interpretation. Interviews were semi-structured and focus groups were guided. After initial categorisation of emergent themes the data from interviews were recoded under categories relating to Activity Theory. I will describe and explore the theory underlying this later in the chapter, when I focus on the data analysis in detail.

3.8. Research Design

I situated my research within the constructionist paradigm and conceptualised what this meant in terms of research methods and methodology as well as indicating what the use of an interpretive methodology implied about the researcher's own theoretical approach. The methods I chose are also rooted firmly within an interpretive framework and I have explored some theoretical background to both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which formed the basis of the data sets for my research design. I have also situated the research reported here within the context of previous research in the field.

At a superficial level my research questions may appear simple, however I was seeking to clarify meaning and understanding of a concept. In Kvale's (1996) terms this may be seen as Exploratory Research. My research question was:

What does *quality* mean when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?

This question was addressed through four related sub questions:

1. What does *quality* mean to teachers when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?
2. What does *quality* mean to secondary school students (11 – 16 years old) in their reading choices?
3. What are the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perspectives on quality?
4. What might be the implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching *good* literature?

I was looking for depth and richness of data in order to explore teachers' and 11 – 16 year old students' perceptions of quality and I chose to collect data through an initial questionnaire to teachers followed by semi-structured interviews with individual teachers and groups of students from 11- 16 years old.

In the next sections I will now detail the sample for the study and show how the choice of questionnaires and individual and group semi- structured interviews were appropriate research instruments to answer my research questions.

3.8.1 Participant Sample

I have already explained that the research was based on schools within the Secondary Partnership of schools related to the University Of Exeter Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). This included the majority of secondary schools within Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall and was a complete cross-section of school types: comprehensive, grammar, Academy, private, girls only, boys only and mixed sex. Not all schools within the sample would be obliged to adhere to the NC (2008).

This was a *convenience sample* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, (2006). Cohen, Manion and Morrison point out the inescapable truth that the convenience sample:

> *Saves time and money and spares the researcher the effort of finding less amenable participants* (p.144)

Arguably this relates to much small-scale educational research because of the inevitable limits of working within school institutions or classrooms; however Cohen, Manion and Morrison also note that the opportunistic nature of the convenience sample is irrelevant if the researcher both reports that the sample is a convenience one and does not seek to generalise from it. It is also relevant to note that since the participants were all volunteers, they are not representative of more general views; however I was not seeking to generalise from the participant sample.

In designing this research access to participants was a factor, although I did not opt for the *easy access* (p.102) cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, simply relying on teachers willing to participate and schools and departments willing for me to come on site and interview students at the school. As researchers in school

we need to have a symbiotic relationship between our subjects (the school communities) and the outcomes of our research. I was not offering immediate potential solutions to actual problems perceived in the volunteer schools. Teachers and pupils are increasingly busy and time is precious. However years spent in school both as a teacher and later as a university lecturer visiting PGCE trainees in English departments, had led me to believe that the quality of the fiction available to 11 – 16 year olds for reading for pleasure and for reading in class was an issue for many teachers.

In the light of this it seemed a reasonable research decision to begin by circulating the questionnaire to all the English departments in all the schools in the University of Exeter secondary PGCE Partnership. As I have already indicated, whilst the geographical spread was limited to the South West of England, nevertheless the questionnaire sample included a broad spectrum of school types as well as encompassing schools with different demographic profiles: urban, rural, areas of high deprivation, areas of low deprivation, ethnographic variety and limited ethnographic mix.

In total 502 questionnaires were distributed to 118 different schools with, as I have said, the possibility of requesting extra electronic versions if required. Of the distributed questionnaires 45 were returned from 19 different schools. This was a very small return (less than 10%) and may be due to the teachers failing to see *direct value* to themselves in the research (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996). It may also have been a factor of timing: I sent the questionnaires out in the middle of the Spring Term, always a busy time. I followed Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) juncture to follow up questionnaires and, since questionnaires were not collecting information for statistical analysis or for generable dissemination, the small sample returned did not seem a significant limitation. As it was, the sample provided sufficient common themes to inform the structuring of the interview schedule and the Diamond Nine Activity cards (Appendix 9). The questionnaires also provided themes about book usage and about quality to illuminate the findings from the analysis of the interviews.

Arising from responses to the questionnaire, the interview samples of teachers and pupils were also *convenience samples* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000); this implies a non-probability approach to data collection. It is important to be open, as a researcher, about the use of the convenience sample. The convenience sample may reduce the possibility of generalisation but does mean *amenable participants* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.144). However, I knew teachers in all the volunteering schools and I had to be aware that this might bring a degree of power imbalance (Creswell, 2007) and that this might need to be considered when conducting interviews. However I did not know all the teachers whom I interviewed and I knew none of the students.

I finally drew on 4 volunteer schools: one selective mixed sex, 11- 18 grammar school; and 3 mixed sex, comprehensive schools. I also interviewed one advisory teacher. All of the comprehensive schools were 11 – 16. Two of the comprehensive schools were in demographically mixed areas (average free school meals compared with the national average) the grammar school represented a socially comfortable demographic (very few free school meals); one comprehensive school was in a relatively deprived area (above average free school meals). The free meal summaries are based on the latest OFSTED reports for each school.

In total I interviewed 12 teachers (4 male and 8 female), and 15 groups of pupils. When arranging interviews I indicated that I would prefer groups of 5/6 students if possible. In practice the group size varied from 2 – 7. Most of the groups knew each other and were from the same class but I interviewed one group who represented a range of year groups and were not in friendship groups. There were 11 groups from KS3 (Years 7-9) and 4 groups from KS4 (Years 10 and 11).

	Schools represented	**Teachers**	**Groups of students**
Questionnaires received	19	45	N/A
Interviews	4	12 (4M, 8F)	15 (KS3, 11, KS4, 4)

Table 3.1 Summary of participant sample

As a researcher I was grateful to the volunteer schools, department and students for giving up their time for my research. It was also the case that, as I have indicated, I knew some of the teachers; I was familiar with the working of the English departments who volunteered to support my research; and I knew that they had a genuine interest in promoting a range of reading amongst their pupils, at school and at home. As a researcher this meant that I needed to be aware of the potential for bias.

3.9 Questionnaire in this research project

3.9.1 Pilot of questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to elicit initial information from teachers with reference to their use of texts in school, their recommendations to pupils for private reading, their own reading and their perceptions of quality in fiction for the 11- 16 year old age group. It is of great importance to pilot a questionnaire before administering it. Not only does the researcher need to consider the value and impact of the questions, but it is also important to consider how the resulting data may be coded. Within these broad requirements the researcher must be cognisant of key areas; Sapsford and Jupp (1996) list five potentially problematic areas.

Firstly: the question wording. Is the language chosen for the question appropriate and is the meaning of each question unambiguous in its sense? Will prompts be required?

Secondly: Is an open-ended question broad enough in its remit to allow exploration but not so far-ranging that the respondent will be unable to provide a response relating to a wide range of possibilities? What has the researcher done to limit the range of possibilities without shutting them down? Are there particular points of vocabulary which may prompt alternative interpretations from those sought for the purposes of the research?

Thirdly: the time taken for the questionnaire. Any researcher must remember the circumstances under which respondents will be completing the questionnaire. In many cases, respondents will be doing this voluntarily and the outcomes of the questionnaire may not impact directly on them unless the information being sought is of a directly personal nature such as a pre-operation health questionnaire. Whilst respondents may have volunteered to complete the questionnaire for valid research in which they have evinced an interest, a questionnaire which occupies too much time to complete and asks overly challenging questions may not yield valid or reliable information if the respondent loses interest or rushes the responses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). The researcher will have no control over this if the questionnaire is completed) at a distance. Thus comprehensibility and time taken for completion needs to be checked at the piloting stage (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

Fourthly: it is important to include questions which will allow coding of respondents in meaningful ways, age, gender, experience for example. In the point below we note that it is also important to situate these questions thoughtfully. There seemed no objection to the factual questions on the first page of the questionnaire; indeed the anonymous nature of the design meant there could be no breach of confidentiality. In the survey some respondents chose not to answer all questions.

Fifthly: the order of the questions in the questionnaire. This is complex and crucial in order to sustain interest in the respondent. It does not relate merely to the order of the information seeking questions but also to relatively straightforward information questions which will define the respondent (age, gender and so on) but may be of little interest to the respondent who knows these details already. It may be that such questions are a way or warming the respondent up and may be put at the start; alternatively maybe they should go at the end to be completed more rapidly as the respondent reaches the end of the questionnaire.

Following on from where to put the information questions, is the more challenging issue of how to order the open-ended questions directly related to the research. The order will stem from what it is essential to ask. However in an open-ended questionnaire some of the logic in the order of the questions could potentially arise from the researcher's perception of potential answers and might inhibit the thinking or responses of the respondent (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

My original questionnaire design raised a number of issues which directly relate to the five categories identified above. Initially I designed a questionnaire without a preamble describing the purpose of the research; I intended this information to go on a separate sheet in order not to distract the respondent once embarked on completion of the questionnaire. However, on reflection, there seemed no need to separate the purpose and in the pilot I included this information at the top of the sheet.

The next issue was one of the wording of the questionnaire title. Originally I chose Teenage Reading Questionnaire. However the use of Teenage/ Young Adult as a nomenclature for the focus of this research is one which has been explored earlier in this dissertation. Since the actual questionnaire was for teachers in school it seemed better to use the word *Students* to link the questionnaire directly to those the respondents taught.

I chose to put the key information about the respondents next and did not change this order from the original design to the pilot. I felt that this information would provide an easy opening to the completion of the questionnaire. In the pilot the required information led the respondents into the next page: again a signal that the questionnaire might not be excessively time consuming. Indeed the questionnaire was deliberately designed to only occupy four sides of A4.

In order to discriminate between respondents I asked for information relating to gender and teaching experience rather than age. The teaching experience requested was narrowed down in the pilot to length of teaching, teacher role and year groups taught between 7 and 11, linking with the focus of the research on the reading of Young Adults between 11 and 16. I took out the reference to the

type of school (grammar, comprehensive, independent) in the pilot. However teachers gave this information so I returned the question about school type in the final version of the questionnaire. I also added a question about the teacher's original degree: this in itself was potentially informative about where the teacher's own experience might be located in terms of the literary canon, although it would not show the extent to which the teacher had embraced degree experiences or rejected them.

In terms of the order of questions my original questionnaire design began by exploring the teacher's own book choices before those of choices for pupils in school. As I developed the pilot for the questionnaires it seemed that asking the teachers about their own book preferences might alter their focus when it came to books for students. Therefore I put the teachers' criteria for books chosen for students first and, to embed the idea of the link between books chosen and the curriculum, linking to the focus in my own research to official pronouncements on quality in official documents, (NC (2008). I deliberately moved from criteria teachers would look for in a book to asking for the names of actual texts for use in class followed by texts teachers might recommend for independent reading.

Although the crux of my research is about quality I asked for open-ended definitions of quality after the book recommendations and just before a final question on their own reading choices. In a sense I hoped that the sandwiching of quality definitions between book recommendations and their own reading choices would provide a type of triangulation. I was aware throughout of Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2000) caveat that open-ended questions are a constraint because they take time to complete; however I did not think that there would be a problem with teachers *articulating their thoughts on paper* (p.256) which can also be a contra-indication for the use of open-ended questions.

Discussion with those who completed the pilot questionnaire indicated that it was important to have a font that was clear and large enough to read at speed. It was also important to leave enough room in the boxes, for book titles for example, for teachers to write in these with some ease. In order to create a questionnaire with user–friendly font size and layout, it did mean that it would also be four sides of

A4. This is long for a questionnaire but, again in order to render it accessible to the user, I took the decision to print four individual and stapled pages, rather than back to back. This did mean that returns of the questionnaires had responses on all pages, if not to all questions.

3.9.2 The final questionnaire

As I stated in the Participant Sample Section (*3.8.1*) the final iteration of the questionnaire was sent to English departments at 118 secondary schools within the South-West of England. I also noted the demography of the sample and the origin of it in Section 3.8.1.

Schools were sent paper copies of the questionnaire and a prepaid envelope for the return of completed copies in order to encourage returns (Denscombe, 2003). An email address was also given for schools to request extra copies. The first page of the questionnaire (Appendix 2) began with a statement of the purpose of the research and my own role as a university lecturer for a Secondary English PGCE course in addition to my research interests because it is important for the researcher to be open about their role (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996; Kvale, 1996).

The questionnaire included a mix of questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006). The closed questions generated data for comparison. As I discussed in the section on the Pilot of the Questionnaire, the questionnaire included details of Teacher gender, Experience, Role and degree subject. The open questions were included to *capture the specificity of a particular situation* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 248). Teachers were asked to cite books at KS3 and KS4 that they recommended for class use and for private reading. They were also asked to list their own private reading choices. In addition (Appendix 2) there were two key open questions requesting teachers' views on what they looked for in a book for their students to read and how they defined quality in relation to books written for students at KS3 and KS4. The 11 – 16 year old age range was defined in KS terms here; the rubric at the top of the questionnaire indicated that this was a survey on the reading of fiction.

I was also mindful of the importance of approaching a research problem through the use of multiple research instruments and the value of combining questionnaire and interview within a project:

> *Questionnaires are most effective when used in conjunction with other methods, especially one or more varieties of the interview technique* (Grix (2004) p.128).

Sapsford and Jupp (1996), referenced earlier, also remind us that the questionnaire has the potential to be a research instrument with the potential to elicit data as valid and rich as data from an interview.

Schools and respondents remained completely anonymous unless they elected to volunteer to take part in interviews. Grix (2004) cites this approach as effective as does (Kvale, 1996). 45 replies were received from 19 different schools (Table 3.1). It was not possible to identify individual schools or respondents from the information on the questionnaires, unless teachers had volunteered to be part of the interview phase of the research. However schools used the prepaid return envelope, which preserved anonymity but allowed for comparisons to be drawn from the questionnaire at school level about, for example, attitude to texts, favoured books. This proved valuable data when later looking at the data through the lens of CHAT.

Initially, the questionnaire returns were analysed through grounded theory principles, looking for emergent themes. The questionnaires provided valuable data in their own right as well as acting as a starting point for the development of the interviews Kvale (1996):

> *Questionnaires are as much highly structured methods of data collection as are interview schedules (p.102).*

The data from the questionnaires were then used to inform the design of the semi-structured interview schedules for the teachers and the group interviews for thestudents, providing a strong link between the two data sets.

3.10 Interviews

3.10.1 The interview pilot

The interview schedule in this research builds on an interview schedule (Appendix 5) used in my earlier research (Hopper, 2005, 2006). During this research it emerged that the interview schedule was too diverse and too long. Not all questions in the schedule were covered in all interviews and transcripts; the indications are that this was often due to lack of time. There were questions concerning teachers' classroom practice and these yielded less data relating directly to issues of quality. Some repetition emerged from questions relating to whether a book was good or bad/enjoyable or not enjoyable and these areas have been combined in the new schedule. The word *quality* has been used throughout in the interview schedule reported on in this research, where judgments are required, in order to give clarity to the direction of the questions.

Limitations emerged during the interviewing process for the pilot study and also during the analysis of the data. These limitations were:

- The interview schedule: Not all interviews covered all questions on the schedule. This was largely due to factors of time evident in the interviewer's comments referring to the fact that time was running out. It may also reflect the number of categories on the pilot interview schedule.
- Since this research was again based in school and again dependent on access to busy teachers, I tried to reduce the schedule so that it would need less time. In reducing it I was also able to give a clearer focus on quality.
- Interviewing technique:
  - On reading transcriptions it became evident that some of the prompt questions, particularly relating to specific books, led interviewees to a consideration of particular books or authors.
  - As a result of the broad scope of the interview schedule not all areas were explored in equal detail as a result of time

constraints. This also relates to the time problem that I addressed above.

- The sample: all those interviewed were volunteers. This means that the sample does not include teachers with no interest in teenage fiction. I was again dependent on volunteers for the main study. However since it was the school who decided might be available, I did get to interview teachers who were not so enthusiastic about fiction for 11 – 16 year olds.

Through the earlier studies I realised that issues of quality related closely to the NC and, indeed, the issues of the school canon raised in the previous chapter. In order to provide a stronger focus for the study the subjects to be asked to complete questionnaires were limited to English teachers of students between 11 and 16 years old. The questions concerning teachers' classroom practice yielded less data relating directly to issues of quality. Some repetition emerged from questions relating to whether a book was good or bad/enjoyable or not enjoyable and these areas have been combined in the new schedule. The word *quality* has been used throughout where judgments are required in order to give clarity to the direction of the questions.

On reading transcriptions it became evident that some of the prompt questions, particularly relating to specific books, led interviewees to a consideration of particular books or authors. The Interview Schedule was expanded as a result of the pilot to investigate separate issues related to perceptions of quality which emerged as significant in the pilot study.

3.10.2 The interview schedules in this study

In seeking views of samples of teachers through semi-structured interviews and views of pupils through focus group interviews, I hoped to identify patterns which would allow me to propose an explicit interpretation for *quality* in the context of fiction for pupils at KS3 and KS4. Data from the interviews were likely to *be incommensurable* (Stenhouse, 1989) in that there could be no direct numerical

comparisons to be made amongst those interviewed but the data would yield qualitative differences of opinions for analysis.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) describe the notion of *power* in an interview which can lead to imbalance or misrepresentation if the interviewer is over familiar or the interviewee trying to please*: the interview is not simply a data collection situation but a social and frequently a political situation* (p.122b) Cohen, Manion and Morrison. I was also aware that in choosing a convenience sample my results would not be generalizable but I nevertheless hoped to relate my own findings to earlier research and contribute questions for debate and further investigation which would be, in themselves, generalizable. I hoped that my questions would form part of a *constant focus on reflection* (Pring, 2000, p,60) in the national debate on the *quality* of fiction for 11- 16 year olds. This debate is perennial, as I have noted in the previous chapter, and my contribution has the potential ultimately to inform and improve professional practice in all those educational aspects to which it applies.

The final interview schedule (Appendix 6) was designed to further explore themes relating to the research questions, which had emerged from the questionnaire data. In the design of both of the interview schedules, for teachers and for groups of students aged 11 – 16, I was very mindful of Kvale's (1996) question types. I had chosen a semi-structured interview form and wished it to encourage exploratory discussion. Therefore I took particular care to include question possibilities which would follow-up, probe or invite interpretation.

I was very aware of potential issues of power and collusion (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2007); Sapsford and Jupp, 1996) since the sample schools (see Section on Samples) were all part of the University PGCE Partnership and I was known in the schools in my professional capacity. Indeed I had trained some of the now practising teachers I interviewed for this study. I was also aware that I could plan to avoid leading questions, but that I also needed to be mindful that my own verbal cues and body language could act as *positive or negative reinforcers* (p.158) (Kvale, 1996) and thus potentially influence

succeeding response to questions; this was particularly true of the teachers I knew well.

3.10.3 The Teacher interviews

I have already noted Grix's (2004) view of the interview as a useful follow-up to the questionnaire. All the teachers received a further briefing, prior to the interview, to remind them of the context and purpose of the interview (Kvale, 1996). All the teachers being interviewed had volunteered to do this and I had their original questionnaire responses with me to refer to during the interview. Since there was a gap of six months between the questionnaire completion and the interviews, referring to the original questionnaires was helpful both to myself and to the teachers as an aide-memoire and counterpoint for discussion.

The interview for the teachers was in 5 parts (Appendix 6). Kvale (1996) notes that the opening minutes of an interview are *decisive* (p.128). The first part of the interview recalled the questionnaire and the *Introducing question* (Kvale) aimed to make the interviewee comfortable and establish a non-aggressive conversational tenor to the interview. The interview then probed attitudes to books for the 11 - 16 year old age group; uses of this fiction in school and recommendations for private reading. Throughout the interview schedule there were opportunities for the teachers to express their individual opinions as well as curriculum or institutional imperatives, although the questions did not explicitly address these issues, in order to preclude any initial bias. The final question sought definitions of quality. By placing the definition of quality question, the crux, at the end of the interview the teacher was able to draw on earlier answers to support their thinking; I was also able to refer to the teacher's previous definitions of quality from the questionnaire and probe and interpret that answer too. I tried to keep questions short and avoid dichotomous confusion in my wording (Kvale, 1996). By listening attentively I was also able to focus probe questions to support elaboration and interpretations.

All the teacher interviews were very time constrained and in some instances it was necessary to concertina the interview schedule. When this happened I tried to ensure that every teacher had due opportunity to define quality. I will consider my relationship with the schools and teachers under limitations later in this chapter.

3.10.4 Student interviews

When interviewing young people it is important to establish a safe comfortable environment. Informed consent had been given in advance by participating pupils and their parents (Ethical considerations, *3.12.3, 3.12.4*) and each participating child had received a letter (Appendix 7) detailing the aims and purposes of the research, and outline of the interview procedures and the key research question (regarding quality) to be addressed. Letters were distributed well in advance via the school, and all participating students had a consent form signed by themselves and by an adult responsible for their welfare.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) remind the researcher that children need to feel safe and not intimidated to respond most effectively in interviews; this, as I noted above, is another reason for the choice of the focus interview structure. It was also important to encourage the students to respond *beyond the institutional expectation, to avoid the interview becoming a bore*, (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 200, p.287) and to get them engaged on the task from the outset (Kvale, 1996).

The interview schedule for the groups of pupils was, as with the teachers' schedule, constructed to draw on findings from the questionnaire. Whilst still taking the form of a semi-structured interview, the interview opened with a Diamond 9 card organising Activity (Appendix 9) for the whole group to engage with at the outset. This Activity involves a group in sorting statements into a Diamond shape. Criteria are broad bands: important, of interest, less significant. Clark (2012) describes how this activity is a valuable pedagogical tool for pupils to *explore and clarify their own value positions, feelings and thoughts regarding a particular theme or idea,* (p.224); there are no right answers, the idea is for a

group to negotiate, discuss and seek consensus. The statements for the Diamond Nine Activity (Appendix 9) were drawn from data extracted from the teachers' original questionnaires; however the word 'quality' was not used in the statements. I instructed each group in the principles of the Diamond Nine Activity before they started, stressing that there were no right answers.

Following the Diamond Nine Activity, I guided the group through other areas of discussion on the interview schedule (Appendix 11); building on the opening discussions from the Diamond Nine Activity. The key areas to cover were the fiction reading patterns of the group; specific titles or authors that they enjoyed; how they found out about books they might enjoy; how they defined teenage fiction; and lastly their definitions of quality. As with the teachers, time was a constraint. Whilst being responsive to developments in the discussion, I did ensure that the question about quality in fiction for their age group was addressed. Grix (2004) talks of the flexibility within the semi-structured interview framework and it was important, as the interviewer, to listen (Kvale, 1996) and structure the discussion yet remain mindful of the interview schedule and time constraints of each interview. The group sessions were fitted into the school day and time allowed for the interactions varied, group sizes also varied (see section on Sample) and were dependent on students willing to participate, school priorities and return of consent forms.

3.11 Data Analysis

3.11.1 The analysis process: theoretical links to CHAT

In my Review of the Literature relating to this research, I stated that social constructionist theories informed the project, and that I was situating the research within a Cultural and Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework, a theoretical perspective itself lying within socioculturalism. In order to demonstrate how this framework informed the data analysis process of my research project I will explore those aspects of CHAT which make it a relevant framework for the analysis.

In the Review of the Literature (Chapter 2) I noted, with reference to historical perspectives, how the use of CHAT also allows an examination of the educational objective of the fiction texts young people are encouraged to read. Issues of quality can be examined in terms of both a cultural and societal educational objective and also in terms of status.

Edwards (2011) is illuminating on how CHAT can be particularly valuable in educational research. She notes that researchers who work with CHAT see context as *integral to the analysis* (p.1). This was certainly true in the case of this study, since interpretations of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds were formed against a background of curriculum and institutional expectations. Similarly Edwards sees CHAT as useful in *analyses of workplace activity*, citing classrooms as a particular example. It is of relevance to the choice of CHAT as an analytical framework for this study that Edwards cites its value in uncovering how people use *tool and material.* Her comment that analysis through CHAT can look at how individuals interact and also:

> *the purposes, values and knowledge to be found in the practices in the institutions or systems they inhabit.* (p.2)

This, too, resonates with this study. Additionally Edwards sees CHAT as a means of capturing the voices of those who operate within systems. However she notes that one advantage of the CHAT approach is that it allows focus on what happens in practice, very much at the heart of this research. The benefits of CHAT as an analytical tool are well summarised by Brown and Cole (2012):

> *A special virtue of the use of activity as an adjunct to, or substitute for, the concept of context is that it both forces attention to the historical dimension of the context/activity in question and allows a means of identifying crucial constituents of the phenomenon being investigated as they relate to each other* (p.4)

This *forcing attention to the historical dimension* whilst finding a way of *identifying crucial constituents of the phenomenon* is key to this research.

Thus CHAT provided an umbrella framework for analysing the data. Questionnaires and interviews were considered separately.

3.11.2 Questionnaire data analysis

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) note that coding *is the primary form of data reduction* (p.265). This means classifying and grouping answers. There were three key elements to the questionnaires: the factual data relating to the teachers' professional biographies; the books recommended and the attendant comments; and the two open-ended questions regarding criteria for choosing a book for 11 – 16 year olds and teachers' perceptions of quality.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) detail seven stages of analysing qualitative data: *1. Establish units of analysis of the data; 2. Create a 'domain' analysis; 3. Establish relationships and linkages between the domains; 4. Make speculative inferences; 5. Seek negative and discrepant cases; 6. Seeking negative and discrepant cases; 7. Generate theory* (p.148). These are helpful steps and give a framework for approaching qualitative data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) offer three stages of analysis for grounded theory approaches: open, axial and selective. These follow the same pattern as Cohen, Manion and Morrison in that they move from establishing codes (the open stage); to creating links and relationships, the narrative (axial stage); and finally the generation of theory (the selective stage).

In order to generate codes it is generally agreed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Sapsford and Jupp, 1996) that the researcher needs to become close to and familiar with the data by frequent rereading – the immersion described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). It is only by the process of *iteration and reiteration* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000 p.149,) that codes *emerge* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and can be refined and modified.

Whilst acknowledging the influence of grounded theory on qualitative data analysis, the analysis of the data reported here uses the approaches of grounded theory, particularly the three stage approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998), rather

than being situated within a grounded theory paradigm. This meant that codes emerged from questionnaire answers and were refined by an iterative process. This framework helped to make sense of the inevitably *messy, confusing and fundamentally non-linear* process of coding (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p.55). However the analysis was not linear but dependent on frequent iteration and revision of codes.

Each question in the questionnaire was coded separately and transcribed manually in tabular form (Appendices 12, 13, 14, and 15). The open questions to do with a) criteria in choice of books (*What do you look for in a book for your students to read?*) and on perceptions of quality in books for 11 – 16 year olds; and b) definitions of quality (H*ow would you define* ***quality*** *in relation to books written for students at KS3 and KS4*?) were coded, as described above, with the key word in the questions (here *criteria* or *quality*) acting as the open stage – in which the emerging axial codes were situated.

3.11.3 Interviews data analysis

All the interviews were transcribed from digital audio recordings. It is important to realise that the transcriptions are in themselves interpretations. The transcript turns the flexibility of the live interview into a closed conversation; that is, a conversation in which new avenues can no longer be explored. Kvale (1998) calls the transcript *a bastard* (p.182), meaning it is a cross between a living conversation and written text. He warns against losing the original spoken conversation in the reduction of the written transcript into *butchered fragmented quotes* (ibid). Whilst Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) are more moderate in their comments, they also warn against completely literal interpretations of the transcript. They remind us that data can be lost in the transcribing process and note that the transcription itself is an interpreting process. They include the need to be open to, for example, tone of voice and inflection; silence; the mood of the interviewee; pauses and interruptions. It is also important to note interviewer bias at any point in the phrasing of questions or response to answers.

One way of addressing the hybrid nature of the transcript is to listen to the recordings in addition to reading transcripts. However at all times it is important that the researcher, who has been completely immersed in all the stages of the research and participant in it, must nevertheless attempt to take an objective stance and to be open to their own potential for biased interpretation. I tried to do this.

The interview transcripts were analysed using a computer programme QSR Nvivo-9. Creswell (2007) notes the advantages of using a computer programme to analyse qualitative data. Here he cites advantages as: a) the potential to store and organise data conveniently; b) the potential to locate easily passages of text relating to codes; c) the possibility of comparing code labels; d) the potential to sift, shift and reorganise codes *hierarchically*; e) the manifestation of a visual representation of the codes; f) the potential to annotate codes and transcripts with linked memos; and g) the flexibility for the researcher to create their own coding template to fit the analysis model chosen.

However, in line with a phenomenological approach, I was also mindful to put *aside* my own experiences in order to minimise my own impact on the data as the codes were created. At this point reflexivity was crucial as I sought to be objective and minimise what may be termed researcher impact. I was aware, as Finlay (2002) describes, that reflexivity is challenging and difficult but I aimed to be aware of the potential for bias in creating the codes and open about the process. Constantly revisiting the codes and being open and willing to adapt and change was part of the process.

I found the flexibility of the computer programme helpful to the organising of the data and particularly because of the flexibility offered in the creation and structuring of the codes. In the first instance I took quality as the key code. It became apparent that there were inevitably many versions of quality and Nvivo allowed for the creation of multiple and interrelated codes.

I have explained at the start of this section how CHAT related to this project in giving a framework for analysing an activity, here 11 – 16 year olds' reading of

fiction, within a cultural and historical context. Once the initial, open or inductive, codes were in place, axial, deductive, codes were created and finally placed within a CHAT framework. In Chapter 4, Findings, p.170 I demonstrate how the codes were developed and how they link to a CHAT analytical framework. I have drawn on Twiselton (2004) for this, beginning with a CHAT framework used by her to analyse practice. I have developed this framework for the research reported here and I explain this in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, The Discussion, I also show how the interpretations of the data were also developed though a further aspect of CHAT that is boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Wenger, 1998; Engeström and Sannino, 2010; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009) which proved significant in this research.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

3.12.1 Permissions

This research was at all times informed by the guidelines for Ethical Research set out by BERA (2004). A detailed plan for the research was submitted to the University of Exeter Ethics Committee and approved (Appendix 10). My supervisors were at all times kept informed of any ethical issues relating to the research and any potential problems or conflicts were discussed with them.

3.12.2 Potential ethical challenges

Ethical considerations need to be at the forefront of the researcher's thinking from the initial conceptualisation of a research question and design plan, through the planning and enacting of the research to the final reporting and dissemination. Of paramount importance in educational research within a socially constructed ontology, is the responsibility to the participants. Sapsford and Jupp (1996) explain this very clearly: *Subjects of the research should not be harmed by it* (p.318). *Participants* means more than just the individuals who are in some way involved in the research, it also means the institutions as well and anyone tangentially involved in the whole research process.

Creswell (2007) also notes that the choice of the research problem should in some way *benefit individuals being studied* (p.63). Creswell goes on to say that research should not *further marginalise or disempower* (ibid) participants. This is significant too; for research may reveal the unexpected or even lead to outcomes contrary to those hypothesised. Along with not disempowering the participants is the corollary of establishing and not betraying the participants' (individuals' and institutions') trust. If participants have been reassured (all participants) of anonymity this must be completely respected in the research process.

Pring (2000), looking at the philosophical principles behind education research, writes of the need for *principled thinking* (p.143) and introduces the idea of the requirement for a researcher in educational research to have a v*irtuous disposition* (p.144) in relation to the research process. Pring notes that educational research takes place within a community, defining this as the concentric societal circles in which we live, work and operate. Pring is in agreement with Creswell (2003) about the need to avoid harm to participants but also notes a tension in the researcher avoiding colluding with a wider opinion because it may be safer. He warns that it is important to consider the potential impact of research on the community, to be ethically aware, but he also warns against negotiating the reporting of research to appease sponsors. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) write about ethical challenges to research and counsel the researcher to have formed a clear idea of their own ethical position, within the frameworks of any agreed outside research frameworks. In line with this Kvale (1996) noted that in qualitative research it is of paramount importance that the researcher has a clearly embedded ethical approach, since the researcher is the *main instrument* (p.117) for collecting, analysing and disseminating the knowledge.

As research progresses the ethical issues become potentially more complex. In qualitative research it is axiomatic that data will be interpreted, that is judgements will be made. Creswell (2007) addresses this by reminding the researcher to provide rich descriptive data and to avoid deception. This, of course, means the researcher being aware of their own beliefs and being transparent about strategies for interpreting the data including means to obviate bias as far as

possible. The notions of *betrayal* and *deception* (p.63) are mooted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) and raised by others (Creswell, 2007; Kvale, 1996; Sapsford and Jupp, 1996) to describe the situation where the researcher ceases to be ethically true to the data in either interpreting or reporting on the findings.

3.12.3 Responsibility to participants

A characteristic of my proposal was that I was seeking frank and honest opinions from the participants, looking for authenticity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000); a hallmark of research within a qualitative paradigm. This means that each participant must be assured of complete confidentiality and the identity of persons and institutions must also be protected.

I was mindful of the need for confidentiality throughout the design, research, analysis and reporting stage of this study. I have already shown that the questionnaire data were anonymous unless the responding teachers had volunteered for the Phase 2 interviews. In the analysis of the data the identities of the participants were not referenced to the personal data they had given. Whilst the interviews were not anonymous, the data have been kept securely and the transcriptions allowed for anonymity. At the start of the interviews students were given the choice of speaking using their own names or adopting aliases; only one group opted for the latter approach.

In describing the data I ensured that no real names were used. I have used descriptions such as Head of Department (HoD) as descriptors but not given context, in order to make the participant less identifiable. I have not named the towns in which the schools were situated and I have striven to avoid overuse of gender as an identifier, since it was not relevant to the research.

3.12.4 Informed consent

Kvale (1996) and Creswell (2007) write of the importance of the participants knowing what the research is about, their part in it and also outcomes and dissemination of results. I have explained how the design and conduct of this research was constructed within the Ethical Guidelines of BERA (2004). BERA

use the term *Voluntary Informed Consent* (p.6) and define this as participants agreeing to participate without *duress.* There is also the expectation, voiced in the same document, that participants should understand the extent of their involvement and the probable outcomes of the project, including reporting, before they agree to participate. Kvale (1996) advocates getting written, signed agreement before beginning the research, in order for the parameters of responsibility to be absolutely clear on both sides.

The initial questionnaire included a letter explaining the purpose and aims of the research (Appendix 2); each individual questionnaire also began with a statement of the research and my own role – professionally and as researcher in this project (see Questionnaire, Appendix 3).

I have explained that the sample for interviews was a convenience or purposive sample. For administrative reasons it was also more effective to interview teachers and students in the same school. The first step in setting up the interviews was to send Consent Letters (Appendices 7, 8) for both students and teachers to the school, well in advance of the actual interviews themselves. The students were all in the 11 – 16 year old age range and I asked for parental permission as well as the student's own agreement to participate. All interviewees had returned Consent Forms from the letters.

In addition to the written Consent Forms I also began each interview, with students and with teachers, by explaining the nature of the research before the interviews began. Participants had the opportunity to terminate the interviews at any point, indeed one group of students did tell me that they were bored and wanted to stop: of course the interview terminated at that point!

At all junctures in the research I had the support of the university and my supervisors and could look to consult with academic supervisors and colleagues if difficult ethical situations arose.

3.12.5 Relevance, reliability and validity

I believe I have established the relevance of this research in the light of a current knowledge base and in terms of future curriculum planning and thinking. Golafshani (2003) states that: *Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in the qualitative paradigm* (p.604). Research may always be critiqued in terms of relevance, reliability and validity but this is less easy to measure in qualitative research in the interpretive paradigm. Rather, in the interpretive paradigm, validity may be addressed through:

> …*honesty, depth, richness and scope of data achieved, the participants approached, and the disinteredness or objectivity of the researcher . (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p*.105*)*

Another term sometimes applied to the reliability of qualitative research is trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). He believes that both reliability and validity in qualitative research may be considered together in the light of *credibility* and transferability as well as *trustworthiness*. This relates to my research. The honesty lies in the transcripts of the interviews. The richness and scope of the of data lie in the length and detail of the interviews. The participants have been selected to provide as rich a range of views and experience as is possible. The objectivity of the researcher is inherent in the use of a semi-structured interview format and the use of coding frames, discussed with a colleague, to analyse the data.

Validity is also concerned with the objectivity of the project: Does the research illuminate and discover what is intended, is it free of bias? In terms of validity related to qualitative research, Silverman (2000) considers that there can be validity in the conclusion provided there is transparency in how the conclusions were reached. Creswell (2007) notes that many writers on qualitative research talk about *trustworthiness, authenticity* and *credibility* (p.207). Creswell also believes that the very fact that researchers are often close to the participants in the research also *add to the value and accuracy of a study* (ibid). For Cohen and Manion and Morrison (2000) achieving validity relates to ensuring the study and analysis is as free of bias as possible. Much of this is down to the awareness of

the interviewer being transparent about their own position, trying to avoid misconceptions of interpretation and not seeking answers that support the interviewer's *preconceived ideas* (p.121).

Among the other possible interferences for which allowance must be made are the following:

- observer effect
- lack of clarity in respondent definitions
- lack of true diversity and representation in the sample
- technical errors in transcription and analysis of the interview data

Observer effect can be minimised as indicated above in the structure and recording of the interviews. Lack of clarity in definitions can be minimised through triangulation of interpretation, for example by use of a co-researcher or critical friend. This will be done on ad hoc basis using professional judgment as to need and appropriacy.

The most practical way of achieving validity or transferability in interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) is to *minimise the amount of bias* (p.121). It is suggested that one way of achieving this is through using an interview with the same format of words for each interviewee. In this study this was achieved by use of the semi-structured interview schedule and, as far, as possible a common interviewer.

Certain features of the research work aimed to maximise reliability, or *consistency* (p.117) as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) explain it. The first feature was the sampling of the research population with all schools in a given population, the University of Exeter Secondary PGCE Partnership covering most secondary schools in Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. Fundamentally this research was, however, about seeking *representativeness in* viewpoint and opinion meaning that subsequent samples taken on a similar basis would yield similar results. The piloted interview schedule adds to this overall reliability and replicability, another key feature of the research. Equally the systematic analysis

and use of emergent data coding frames in allowing the research subjects to speak for themselves should be an explicit and transparent process that will add to the potential. The reliability claimed here must also be situated within the paradigm of qualitative research and, as stated earlier, interpreted through the lens of trustworthiness. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) in citing Lincoln and Guba (1995) use the term *dependability* to describe reliability in qualitative research; Cohen, Manion and Morrison address this in detail by giving a set of approaches to ensure dependability in qualitative research.

Similarly, Creswell (2003), too, delineates ways in which *credibility*, *authenticity* or *trustworthiness (*p.196) may be embedded in the project as markers of reliability and validity. He cites, for example, the use of *rich, thick description* and clarifying researcher bias through self-reflection and an open and honest narrative. I believe that this is evident throughout my report on my research.

3.13 Limitations

Educational research, situated in the social constructionist, qualitative paradigm deals with human beings and human interactions situated in a community. The researcher, as is the case in my project, is often at the heart of the research too. Inevitably, perhaps, there were limitations in the project as originally conceived and in its execution. Referring back to the issue of trustworthiness considered in the previous section, I do not believe that the outcomes of the research are invalidated by the limitations but it is, however, important to be open in any research report about the nature of those limitations.

3.13.1 Sample

I have already justified the choice of a convenience or purposive sample (in Section *3.8.1*). It could, however, be argued that *trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm*, in choosing the convenience sample, I did I was limiting sample spread and diversity. However Creswell (2007) indicates that in

qualitative research it is not always necessarily helpful to have a large sample, particularly if the research intention is not to generalise, but to inform.

My professional role as a university lecturer and PGCE trainer, in addition to my existing relationships with the sample schools was a potential limitation. I have addressed the constraints this may have imposed on the teachers, particularly those I may have trained, and the issues of power inequality that may have arisen. I do not believe that these presented as problems, but I was aware when coding to be mindful of leading questions and the less overt cues I may have given (Pring, 2000) during interviews. I have aimed to be transparent at these possible effects on the trustworthiness of the data in reporting the data.

3.13.2 Neutrality

One particular limitation linked to my relationship within the sample schools may have been sustaining neutrality. Since my intention was to give voice to the opinions of both the teachers and the students in the sample, the extent of my ability to be neutral was, in any case, arguable and indeed the value of complete researcher neutrality was questionable. Although my intention was to illuminate or act simply as an advocate for a particular viewpoint (Pring, 2000), I may, as a university researcher, have been perceived as a *gatekeeper* to developing understanding and knowledge myself. I did, however, employ every possible procedure to maintain systematic neutrality in the conduct of the research. I tried to interpret concerns raised in individual interviews into the context of the data from the whole research.

It was also important to be self-reflexive, which is being aware of my own impact on the research and the impact of all my research choices and decisions on both participants and potential interpretations of data. My personal biography, related at the opening to this research, is relevant because participants were likely to be influenced to some degree by their view of me as a university based researcher holding a particular position. There was no simple solution to this except to be mindful of it at all stages of the research and interpretation of the data. I also

needed to be transparent about my role in all research encounters with all participants.

3.13.3 Time

Most small scale research projects are time limited, as this project was. There were issues with the point at which the questionnaire was sent out within the context of a busy school year; this may have affected the quantity of returns. However schools are always busy and teachers frequently cite excessive paperwork as a problem: my questionnaire undoubtedly added to a perceived sea of paperwork. Remembering Sapsford and Jupp (1996), a limitation of the study may have been that the teachers did not see my research as directly relevant to them. However it was a choice to investigate perceptions; change cannot come without information and a greater understanding of the problem. It was not possible to problematize the idea of *quality* in the qualitative model of research that I proposed.

In hindsight the initial open question on the questionnaire relating to quality may have been too closely allied to the curriculum in asking for definitions of quality in books for students in KS3 and KS4. However this did not seem to influence the range of responses and did tie in with earlier questions about use of books in the classroom.

There were also time constraints on the interviews themselves. Any research situated in an educational situation is likely to be bounded by institutional constraints. When agreeing to take part in the research, schools were told approximately how long was required for each interview. However I was the visitor and dependent on the school for access to participants. At each school there were unavoidable changes to the proposed schedule for interviews; some were curtailed. Although regrettable, I do not believe it affected the quality of the interviews since the nature of the semi-structured interview schedule allowed me to adapt to changing circumstances and focus on key issues.

Whilst triangulation is a valuable tool to ensure trustworthiness, nevertheless the anonymous questionnaire data have been a tool to use to check the authenticity of opinions expressed in the interviews. Supervisors were valuable, in the role of critical friends, in providing coding checks and discussing judgements.

Whilst I wished to remain open to the diversity of the 11 – 16 year olds' reading choices, as (for example, Hall and Coles, 1999; and NLT, 2008), nevertheless I decided to focus this particular research on perceptions of quality in fiction. It remains important to acknowledge diversity of reading choices that students aged 11 – 16 make and to understand that this may not always start with fiction. This may need to be addressed in future research.

3.14 Justification and Summary

This chapter explores the theoretical context of my study and illustrates how the choice of research paradigm was matched by the choice of methodology and methods, including the analysis of the data. I have explained how this research is situated within a constructionist epistemology; has an interpretive theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998) and uses research methods drawn from an interpretive methodology. I have illustrated how the research questions I was investigating were best addressed through the epistemology, theoretical perspectives and methodology chosen.

I have shown how the choice of research instruments I used fit within the interpretive theoretical framework I have chosen and contribute to providing data to illuminate the key concepts of the research question and sub-questions. In addition I have been open about and justified my selection of a convenience sample for the research, again situating this within a theoretical background. I have also been open about the methods of data analysis and explored the particular CHAT framework used to inform and illuminate the analysis of the data. The use of the CHAT framework also allowed for multiple perspective interpretations of the data within this research will. As I explain in Chapter 5 (Discussion), the examination of the data through multiple perspectives has

allowed for fresh insights to emerge into the attitudes of the various communities represented by this study.

At all points I have been open about issues of access, consent and anonymity and I have shown how this research adheres fully to recognised BERA ethical guidelines. I have indicated that this research is designed to inform and not change knowledge but I will be considering how what is reported in the research has the potential to contribute to a body of professional knowledge and thus, ultimately, may contribute to change.

In the next chapter (Chapter 4) I will explore the findings in detail and in the following chapter (Chapter 5) I will explain the significance of the findings, re-examining them in the context of the Review of the Literature reviewed in Chapter 2. In this way I aim to illuminate what students and teachers conceptualise as:
What does *quality* mean when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?

And how analysis of these perceptions answer the related sub questions:

1. What does *quality* mean to teachers when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?
2. What does *quality* mean to secondary school students (11 – 16 years old) in their reading choices?
3. What are the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perspectives on quality?
4. What might be the implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching literature of *quality*?

and to propose ways in which the research reported here might both inform the national debate and also be further developed in the future.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the data. I present the data from the initial questionnaire first. After that I present the data from the interviews with teachers and pupils from 11 – 16. Through these findings, based on the questionnaires and the interviews, I show how the data have answered the first three research sub-questions; the final sub-question is addressed in the next chapter, The Discussion.

The main question was:

What does *quality* mean when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?

The sub-questions addressed in the findings were:

1. What does *quality* mean to teachers when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?
2. What does *quality* mean to secondary school students (11 – 16 years old) in their reading choices?
3. What are the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perspectives on quality?

This final sub-question is addressed in Chapter 5, The Discussion:

4. What might be the implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching literature of *quality*?

4.2 The Data

4.2.1 The Questionnaire

4.2.1.1 The Questionnaire sample

This questionnaire sought initial information from teachers alone on attitudes to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for use in the classroom and for private reading. There

were 45 responses from 18 schools; all responses were voluntary and anonymous. The schools were a complete cross-section of secondary schools in the south-west of England. They included an independent boarding school; grammar and selective schools; Academies and comprehensive schools. Some schools had an 11 – 16 year old student intake; others took students from 11 – 18 years of age.

Respondents also represented a cross-section of English teachers. They included a County Advisor; an Assistant Head; a Head of Faculty and an assistant head of Faculty; a Director of Studies; Heads of Department; seconds in department; a curriculum Co-ordinator; a KS3 coordinator and class teachers. Teaching experience ranged from those with more than 20 years' experience; those in their middle years of teaching; and some in the early stages of their careers, with less than 5 years' experience. A third of the respondents were male and two thirds were female. A large majority had degrees in English or related subjects.

4.2.1.2 Questionnaire data

Summary findings are reported below arising from two questions on the questionnaire requiring qualitative feedback and relating directly to the research questions:

What do you look for in a book for your students to read?

How would you define the term quality in relation to books written for students at KS3 and KS4?

The data were analysed thematically through an iterative process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) using grounded theory approaches as described in Section *3.11.2*. Tables of results are in Appendices 12, 13, 14 and 15. These questions related to reasons behind the choice of a class text and definitions of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year old readers. The headings relate to the key themes that emerged from an analysis of the data.

Teachers responded qualitatively to the questions above regarding reasons for choosing books to use with students in class and for private reading and about teachers own views on quality. The teachers also responded to questions about texts they would recommend for both class and private reading and gave details of the books that they were currently reading. Whilst these data do not relate directly to the research questions, summary data are presented in Appendices 12 and 15.

4.2.1.2.1 What do you look for in a text?

Reasons for choosing texts to use in class fell into two broad categories linking either to specific teaching opportunities or to aspects of text the teacher valued. There were points where these two categories overlapped. There is a table of results in Appendix 14.

4.2.1.2.2 Engagement

A number of respondents mentioned that they wanted a text chosen for class use to engage the students; this was noted by 15 teachers. Engagement was linked to wanting to interest students and *grab the children's attention* and the purpose of this was stated by one teacher that they wanted students to *enjoy the reading experience.* Plot, pace, subject matter and a fast paced or exciting narrative were all seen to contribute to overall engagement. On the other hand only two teachers explicitly stated that they wanted students to enjoy the text read in class. Two teachers mentioned that they wanted the text they chose for class use to *encourage reading* or to provide motivation to prompt further reading; however this was not a large concern. It is, perhaps, surprising that more teachers did not focus on the idea of encouraging reading as a reason for choosing books for either class use or for private reading.

One teacher stated that they themselves needed to enjoy the text they chose; however this was a lone comment. This is interesting because it may be indicative that enjoyment for either teacher or class is not the prime reason for

choosing to read a text. On the other hand several teachers were concerned that they chose a text that was accessible in terms of reading demands and in terms of suiting a range of abilities; this is a separate issue from enjoyment. A number of teachers also wanted the text chosen to appeal to both genders, notably in terms of content or theme. Another teacher looked for a class text that had *lots of accompanying resources;* this, too, is indicative of thinking that situates the text as a classroom artefact or tool.

4.2.1.2.3 Challenge

It was evident that teachers wanted to use class texts that provided challenge. The idea of challenge was mentioned specifically by eight teachers. However there was less precision about what the challenge might mean. Two teachers referred to this in terms of challenging ideas and perceptions of academic challenge; the parameters of the challenge to ideas or in academic terms were not specifically defined.

4.2.1.2.4 Relevance

15 teachers noted that they wanted texts chosen for class use to be relevant to the students they were teaching. In one instance this referred to relevance to the teaching objectives. On the other hand most of the respondents who mentioned relevance explained this as relevance to the students' own lives and interests. Some linked this to topic or age of character in the book and others to the potential for pupil engagement and enjoyment. For some this meant books with a particular theme of growing up: the Bildungsroman (Trites, 2000) discussed in the Review of the Literature.

4.2.1.2.5 Issues

Relevance was also referred to in the kind of issues teachers were looking for in a class text. However, in terms of issues, teachers saw the ideas that might be raised through the book on a broader palette. Teachers wanted the issues to make their students think beyond themselves. One expressed this as looking for

issues from a broad *moral, philosophical, personal, psychological* frame. However they also wanted issues dealt with sensitively and to prompt good discussion in class. Teachers also noted the themes they wanted in books and there was a considerable overlap with the themes and the issues and how they might be addressed through the book. With both issues and themes there was a real desire to use the ideas raised in the books *to enrich students' understanding of wider issues;* however wider issues were not always specifically defined. Discussion arising from the study of the narrative was the common approach to using the themes or issues to help broaden students' understanding.

4.2.1.2.6 Potential for inspiration

It was hoped by several teachers that a carefully chosen and taught text might be transformational for pupils. By this the teachers meant that the students might develop a different world view, think more deeply or gain sensitivity through their reading. Some hoped that the class text might inspire students and take them away from their own ordinary life. The idea of developing empathy through reading was prevalent. They felt that they were more likely to achieve this aim by using books linked to real life of a recognisable reality. This linked back to the need for topical themes and issues.

4.2.1.2.7 Curriculum

Curricular imperatives were not mentioned frequently. This may be because the teachers would assume that texts used in class would also link to curriculum needs and requirements. It may also be because the questionnaire did not relate directly to the curriculum. When curriculum was mentioned specifically by the teachers it related to cross curricular opportunities offered or a link to modules previously studied, such as *war or different cultures*. Linked to curriculum opportunities was one reference to choosing a text which offered a broad *cultural context*.

The classics were only briefly referred to because they were *widely recognised;* this may indicate that classics, or the school canon, do not define teachers' thinking about literary texts.

Beyond the broader requirements from a text taught in class, teachers were also concerned with the text as a written artefact; it was evident that the chosen text was also seen as providing opportunities for teaching about language and textual structure.

4.2.2 Language and textual structure

4.2.2.1 Plot

Plot features were a key element for the teachers with 21 commenting on aspects of plot. The idea of an engaging plot was recurrent and this was supported by a desire for *excitement*, intrigue *a strong story* or *twists* in the narrative. Two teachers referred to gender preferences in the plot, but several teachers thought that the plot should be relevant or address issues their students would relate to. One teacher also required a strong narrative voice and another specifically required the potential for emotional involvement. Teachers thought that action would draw students in and sustain interest. Plot and narrative were both used to indicate the need for a good story.

4.2.2.2 Characters

Fourteen teachers referred to characters as being key to a good work of fiction to use in class. They wanted characters that students could relate to, often of a similar age to the readers. They wanted characters, to be interesting, to appeal to both genders and to develop in some way. Teachers described such characters as *gripping*, *captivating* or *relatable.*

4.2.2.3 Writing

Teachers preferred books that were well written, although this was less important than a strong plot. Definitions of well written included *strong narrative voice* and

good use of language. The need for *well-crafted language* was linked to linguistic tasks which might arise from a reading of the text where the linguistic features might provide models or a beginning for discussion. Five teachers specifically referred to hoping to find good *description, excellent detail or accessible imagery* in the texts they chose for use in class.

4.2.3 Definitions of quality

Teachers' definitions of quality in terms of fiction for students from 11 – 16 correlated closely with the reasons for choosing texts to use in class. The criteria used to express ideas about quality were closely linked to how books might be used or understood in a literary sense with less emphasis on personal pleasure. Only two teachers specifically mentioned *long established* as being a sign of quality (*it has stood the test of time*) and two teachers linked the gaining of an external award with quality, although one teacher specifically noted that *because a book has won an award does not always mean it has quality*. In the descriptions of quality words such as *engaging* or *interesting* prevailed without further explanation.

Some teachers were honest about the difficulty in explaining quality with any clarity. One teacher thought that fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age range lacked quality entirely; another honestly stated that any view of quality must be subjective; whilst a third teacher found it difficult to think of any criteria for quality at all. However two teachers described quality in one case as *substance and honesty* and in another as: *integrity; humanity; warmth; moral purpose; absence of gratuitous violence*.

Some common themes emerged, as stated above, but the struggle to explain in any precise detail prevailed.

4.2.3.1 Accessibility

Just as with books for use in class, teachers felt that books representative of quality should be accessible. This meant accessibility across the ability range and

to both genders, but also that it could be read and appreciated on a range of levels. Length, surprisingly, was noted by one teacher as a marker of quality and this appeared to mean not overly long.

4.2.3.2 Entertaining

Teachers expected books of quality to engage and entertain and one teacher saw the level of engagement or entertainment as a criteria for quality in itself. Engagement meant an opportunity for the student *to get lost in a story,* a story for the student *to get lost in* or *want to read on*. *Engaging* was used as a discriminator by itself and also in conjunction with *plot, character and narrative/ storylines and themes*. There was some consensus that quality provided a link to the students' own experiences either through themes or plot.

On the other hand six teachers noted that a book of quality should challenge the readers. There was little amplification of challenge as a concept, although one teacher linked it to complexity and another to the themes. Three teachers also wanted the book to specifically engage the imagination.

It was surprising that only four teachers linked the idea of a book of quality to developing or extending the students' reading habits. Perhaps this is assumed. One teacher stated that a book of quality might *make them actually want to read*.

4.2.3.3 Relevance

Teachers linked quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds to its relevance to the lives and interests of the readers. This idea of relevance included the possibility of teenage readers being able to identify with themes, story or characters. For some teachers relevance linked to themes of merit and two teachers also thought that relevance included an element of topicality, *what is happening in the world today*; for others this meant broader challenging and engaging themes linked to the students' own experiences.

4.2.3.4 Themes

Themes deemed of quality linked to issues and relevance to the target audience. No specific themes were noted but words used to describe appropriate themes described them as *meaningful and substantial, topics of merit, challenging, clear themes explored in a mature and accessible way*. One teacher thought quality lay in books dealing with *the theme of the moment* but did not specify further. There was again some consensus that themes might also relate to the students' own experiences.

Some teachers also mentioned issues. Again there was a common feeling that issues should be relevant to the students' own experience and that these might include sensitive or cultural matters.

4.2.3.5 Thinking

Teachers had the aspiration that a book they considered of quality might have a lasting or transformational effect on the reader. These aspirations were broad based and high. At a basic level teachers wanted the books of quality to be *thought-provoking* or simply *provoking*. At a more complex level teachers hoped that books might affect the individual student's world view at a deep level. One teacher expressed this as books containing a *literary truth and thus point the way to a more humane world*; another wanted books of quality *to reveal what it is to be human*. Another hoped that the reader of such a book would feel the benefit of completing the journey either *emotionally, intellectually or aesthetically.* Others wanted a book of quality to help the reader *to evaluate their ideas* or *think and view the world differently* as a result of the reading experience.

4.3 Quality in structure and content

Over half of the definitions of quality linked specifically to literary features of the text. These included plot, character, structure, language and writing style. Many

of these features linked to the teaching possibilities that might emerge from a reading of text and appeared to indicate that teachers linked their own ideas of quality to curriculum imperatives and classroom possibilities.

4.3.1 Plot

The idea of a good story as a basic requirement of quality was something that had a *sophisticated, engaging or interesting narrative structure* or *narrative technique* which was *not formulaic* but *unique.* Teachers' comments on quality in terms of plot were general rather than precise but teachers valued plots that were *exciting* or *drew the reader in*. Early action that engaged the reader was seen as important. They considered that quality books should have *a gender balance.* One teacher noted that adventure stories were favoured by lower set boys but this seemed to link more to teaching requirements than a concept of quality. A book of quality would also be well structured in terms of style and plot line.

4.3.2 Character

There was some consensus that characters in books of quality would be *engaging* or *credible* and might allow the students to identify with them or their situations. One teacher felt that characters would be more than two-dimensional; another stated the same idea, expressing it as having characters that would be multi-faceted and who change or develop.

4.3.3 Writing

Almost half of the respondents (21 /45) mentioned the way the book was written as a signifier of quality. There was the same lack of precision in the references to writing as has been noted in the other identified criteria of quality. Teachers thought quality lay in books that were *well-written, fluently written* or *well-crafted.* One teacher explained well written as: *grammatically accurate, range of vocabulary, sentence types with length for effect*. Another looked for *craft* and *specified a sense of audience*.

Other criteria of good writing included: *authoritative or creative prose; authorial voice*; *clarity of expression* and being *non-patronising to the readers*. One teacher hoped the writing would be good *enough to reach the reader on an emotional level.* Pace was also valued. Originality was valued although not precisely explained.

Some teachers referred to particular linguistic features that they expected to find in fiction that they would adjudge quality. The linguistic features encompassed the overall effect for example, *beautifully crafted language* and *clarity of expression*; but also particular literary features such as *imagery* and *figurative language*. One teacher also looked for the use of diverse vocabulary.

Teachers hoped that writing of quality would demonstrate originality, linking this to *excitement, topicality, great style plot and character* and *voice*.

4.3.4 Quality for Teaching

As with the choice of texts to use in class, teachers did align their views of general quality to the possibilities of using the text with students for teaching purposes. The key criteria of quality expounded above, were also seen as opportunities to teach 11 – 16 year olds about text and literary features. Discussion that arose from themes or issues was important. Through a text of quality students could learn an *appreciation of* the author's *craf*t. Texts of quality allowed teachers to look at the skills of narrative writing including plot, character, setting and themes. Well-structured imagery provided opportunities for students *to use as models – similes and metaphors for examples*.

There was some concern about the lack of choice for examination texts and one teacher considered that quality was ***ABSENT*** in books written for students at KS3 and KS4. The bold, underlined, italicised capitals are there to indicate the strength of feeling evinced by that teacher's response.

Responses to the questionnaire informed the planning of the interview schedule. This has been described in Chapter 3, Methodology.

4.4 Interview data

Data were initially analysed inductively using principles of grounded theory analysis; the open analysis, Strauss and Corbin (1998). One of the purposes of this research was to let the voices of the students in school and the teachers be heard. At the first point of analysis it was important to keep the range of codes open, allowing data to emerge and for me to be open to new patterns. Once the initial open analysis was completed I sought to create coherence from the data, to find meaning.

In order to create that coherence these open codes were then coded deductively, the axial coding. To do this I looked both inductively and deductively at the open codes in order to identify causal relationships between these open codes, creating new clusters of data. There can be tension in moving from open, inductive, codes to axial, deductive codes, and I was aware of the need to be explicit about the connections I was noting. The object in creating the axial codes was, through an open process of induction and deduction, to create new data sets which would clarify and give meaning to the phenomenon under investigation.

Finally the axial codes were systematically refined and developed into data sets relating to the theoretical CHAT framework, Table 4.1 below, which draws on Twiselton (2004) as noted in the previous chapter. At the point of selective coding, the pre-existence of a theoretical model supported the deductive coding and themes fitted comfortably within the chosen theoretical framework based on CHAT. These final data sets represented the selective codes noted by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and the theoretical framework, itself thus provided a means to generate theory from the data. In Chapter 5, The Discussion, I also show how the use of the CHAT framework led to looking at the data through the lens of boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Wenger, 1998; Engeström and Sannino, 2010; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009); this in turn was significant in the development of new theoretical perspectives reported in Chapter 5.

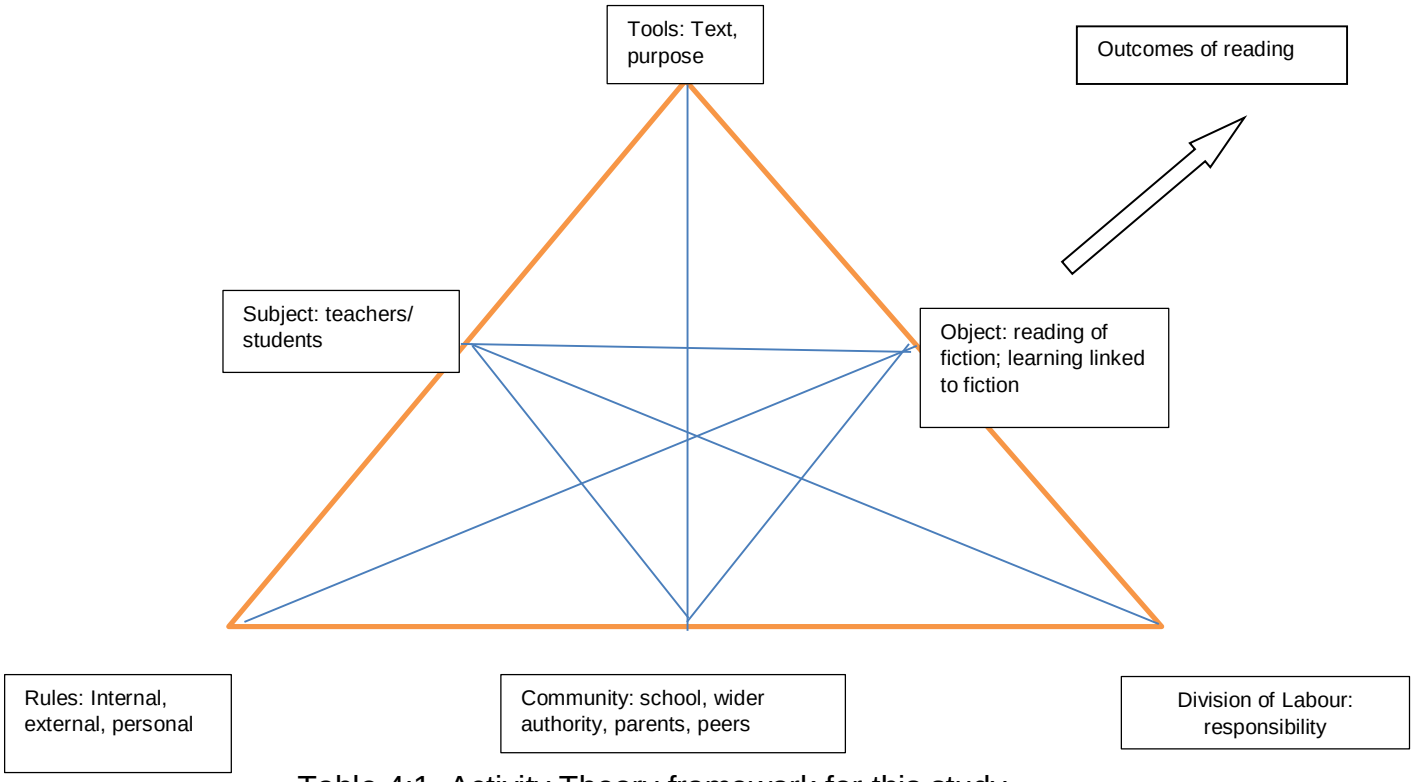

Table 4:1. Activity Theory framework for this study

The following tables (4.2 – 4.6) show how the axial (deductive codes) mapped on to the theoretical framework in order to generate theory. Each table represents an aspect of the CHAT theoretical framework. The first column in each table indicates the axial codes; the second column indicates the range of the open (inductive) codes mapped into the axial codes. In section 4.5 below I further define how the elements of the CHAT theoretical framework were interpreted for this study.

Community	**Those with an interest in what students read**
Gatekeepers	Those who monitor what students read and who may impose restrictions: these include policy maker and examination boards
Library	The school library and the school librarian
Parents	Parents and guardians of the students
Peers	Students, their friends and school colleagues
Teacher community	Teachers: the whole teacher community

Table 4:2 Community categories

Responsibility	**Those with a responsibility for what students read. This may be a professional or personal responsibility**
Teacher community	Teachers, Heads of Department, Librarians
Parents	Parents, Guardians of students
Curriculum	This includes teacher responsibility to the curriculum: giving exposure to the Canon; challenge; cultural, social and historical context awareness; challenge; the possibility of progression; giving students access to books perceived to be of quality
Library	This includes library access and provision; the role of the library within the school in developing reading
Students	This includes students' own reading habits and preferences and the role of peers in recommending texts

Table 4:3 Responsibility categories

Rules	**The limitations on what students may read. These restrictions may be curricular or personal**
Curriculum	This includes curriculum and examination requirements.
Teacher community	This includes school and wider limitations including availability of texts; internal and external pressures
Gatekeepers	This includes internal and external expectations from eg the department, the school and other interested parties such as parents

Table 4.4 Rules categories

Object	**The aims and outcomes of reading**
Canon	Giving students access to books seen as having a literary status
Choosing books	Including recommendations, awards, cover, blurb…
Curriculum	Fulfilling a range of curriculum and examination requirements, including examination success and high grades
Text related activities	Activities which engage students linked to the text eg role play, discussion, writing in character
Themes	Learning about topics or themes (eg war, drugs, homelessness..) through story
Transferable skills	Developing students' skills such as their own writing, developing pupil vocabulary
Understanding of literary techniques	These include authorial techniques such as cliff hangers; generic aspects of literature such as plot and character development

Table 4:5 Object categories

Tools	The books and authors chosen to fulfil the Object and within the Rules and Responsibilities of the Community
Authors	Those who write the books
Books	These include books for class and private use. Some books for class use are directly linked to the curriculum and / or examination syllabi

Table 4.6: Tools categories

4.5 Definitions of the theoretical framework categories for this study

4.5.1 Community

Community comprises those who have an interest in what students read. There are concentric circles of these. In the outer circle are policy makers and those who oversee the Curriculum and examination requirements. The next circle includes those who publish books, those who stock children's/ young adult sections in bookshops and libraries and those who organise Children's Book Awards such as the Carnegie Award. Then we have the circle of those with 11 – 16 year olds' interests at heart beyond the school gates: these are generally parents or guardians. Next is the wider school circle of those with a broader interest in the student's achievement and progress in school; this operates at school policy level. This is followed by a subject specific department circle; then the individual teacher. The adults can also be broadly described as the gatekeepers, relating to themes raised in the Review of the Literature. Students themselves are in the community as individual readers and pupils and as part of an interested peer group.

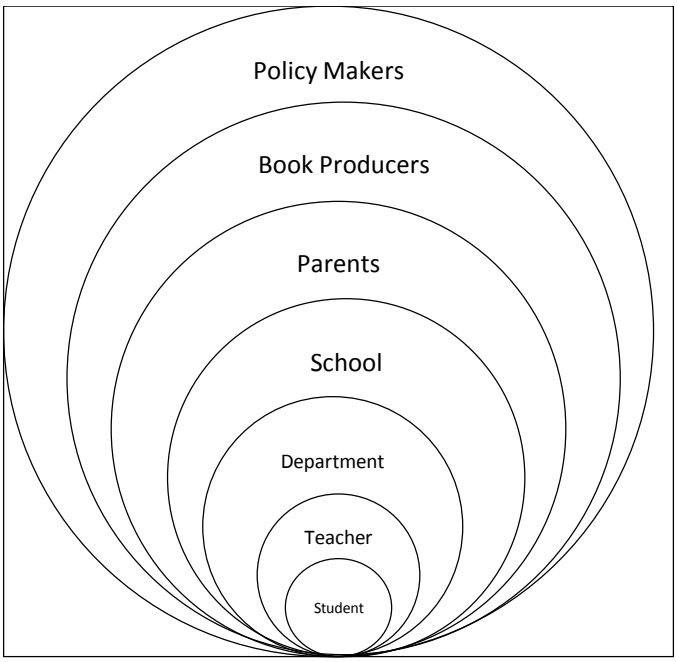

Table 4.7 Circles of community

4.5.2 Responsibility

The Responsibility, or division of labour, in determining what students read is complex and relates closely to the circles of community (Table 4.7). The outer layer is the policy makers, curriculum makers and Examination Boards. Under this is the school curriculum which is, in turn supported by the department curriculum. The responsibility is twofold: to the curriculum and to a wider more ephemeral desire to improve literacy, inculcate a love of reading and open a student to a range of literature. The library underpins this at both levels. Without doubt parents also have a role in supporting the student within the curriculum and in the wider sense of improving literary experience. Students also have a responsibility both to fulfil curriculum and examination requirements but also to be participant in developing skills, experience and taste. The students' perspective is both their own, assuming the community expectations, but also the whole community expectation.

4.5.3 Rules

Rules are created by the whole community, each layer having input, and they also determine the responsibility. Examination and curriculum rules are seen as rigid and offer little opportunity for negotiation or modification. Departmental rules will be more flexible and dependent on leadership, group input and, to an extent, individual interpretation. Rules relating to examination and curriculum are restricting at all levels. However rules relating to developing literacy skills or developing cultural experience are more open to personal and individual interpretation. This is true of teachers and students. Personal interpretations will also be dependent on an individual's prior experiences and influences: this is true of parents, teachers and students.

4.5.4 Object

The Object includes both purpose and expectations of reading books. This relates to curriculum, examination and learning requirements but also to wider aims to develop intellectual skills, knowledge and curiosity. One purpose may be to encourage pleasure in reading; however it is often expressed as a desire to improve literacy. This latter has a purpose that is more linked to the acquisition of skills. Sometimes purpose will include classroom and learning activities which may arise from a reading of the book. The activities can take precedence over the book content although they may be intrinsically linked to the story such as discussions on the theme of a book.

4.5.5. Tools

The Tools are the books and authors chosen by those responsible to fulfil the rules and, ultimately, meet the object. Tools are bounded by external rules (curriculum and examination), internal availability (shop, stock cupboard, library….) but also the knowledge of those responsible, particularly teachers, parents and 11 – 16 year olds themselves. The tools may be a conduit for purposes beyond reading, enjoying and understanding the book.

4.5.6 Summary of CHAT categories

In the previous sections I have shown in Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6, how the data were coded. The Tables illustrate how the open, inductive codes from the initial analyses were recoded deductively in the axial codes which were then regrouped into the selective codes represented by the CHAT categories. This allowed the generation of theory from the data. Sections 4.5.1 – 4.5.5 define in more detail how the CHAT categories were interpreted for this study and frame the presentation of the findings from the interview data.

4.6. Interview findings

4.6.1 Introduction

The interviews took place in four schools in the South West of England. The sample was a participant sample based on teachers who had volunteered to participate in this study in response to the initial questionnaire. One school was a selective grammar school with students aged from 11 – 18 years on age. The other three schools were comprehensive schools, two with 11 – 16 year age groups and one with an 11 – 18 year old age range.

12 teachers were interviewed. Their experience ranged from Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) to mid-career teachers to those with considerable experience. Roles ranged from class teacher to second in department and HoD. One teacher also had an advisory role.

15 groups of students were interviewed. Group sizes ranged from one individual pupil to groups of six. All students had volunteered. All year groups at KS3 and KS4 were represented although there were more interviews with students from KS3. There was a mix of gender with 25 boys being participant and 39 girls.

In this section I shall look at the data in terms of the CHAT categories defined above in order to illuminate how differing perspectives impact on views of quality of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds and to show how differing influences contribute to

those views of quality. Presenting the findings in terms of the CHAT theoretical framework allows a close analysis of precisely how each category in the framework impacts on the perceptions of quality in fiction which, in turn, leads to the generation of new theory in Chapter 5, The Discussion.

4.7 Community

I begin with the layers of community. From the perspective of both teachers and students the community that impacts on the activity is wide ranging consisting of library, parents, peers and bookshops and publishers. I have already mentioned what is almost a symbiotic relationship between rules, relationships and community. Each one impacts on the other (see definitions in Section 4.5).

We find that the community surrounding young people's reading is one that considers itself knowledgeable; everyone has an opinion on what is appropriate reading material. Broadly speaking the community divides into the professional educators: teachers, librarians and then others concerned in the young person's life: parents, peers and also publishers and purveyors of books. However the lines are blurred. Teachers bring to bear opinions which stem from both professional beliefs and imperatives but also personal beliefs and preferences; parents' views may be influenced by their own experiences at school and a desire for their child's reading to be more than simply pleasurable but to also support intellectual and educational development. Many demonstrate dependence on outside agencies for knowledge of appropriate texts. There is, as I have already noted in previous sections, considerable overlap with rules and responsibility and how these affect or are enacted by differing members of the community.

4.7.1 Gatekeepers

There are references in the literature to the gatekeepers of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds. Parents and teachers can see themselves as having a role as gatekeepers of what the young people need. Their criteria will be influenced by aspects of rules and responsibility and may link to curriculum or to matters of taste or even

decency at a more subjective level. In some instances this involves an opinion on quality but that quality may not necessarily be purely literary.

When it comes to private reading there is a wide spectrum of attitude. Some teachers are reluctant to interfere in any way; others feel they should influence choices of text and progression in reading even to expressing anathema at the possibility of exerting influence. There was an awareness of the possibility of being guardians or gatekeepers for 11 – 16 year olds' private reading. One teacher expressed abhorrence at the thought of state interference in the quality of what young people might read in private. Monitoring students' private reading was not seen as a priority, although teachers wished there was more time to devote to encouraging this.

Choice of class text is heavily influenced by curriculum and examination imperatives and any thought of personal progression or enlightenment is very much subordinate to the need for achieving good examination results. One teacher said, *honestly*, that she only read recommendations from the new NC. Another spoke of choosing easy texts for examination purposes. There is also reference to the canon and classics with some teachers being aware of their own literary background and the need to introduce their students to literary heritage texts. One teacher spoke of reading what you were told to teach and another mentioned that they only read one book a year in class. Another expressed anger that the prospect of an examination might turn a potential thing of joy into one of horror.

Within schools, some see the HoD as being a gatekeeper to suitability of all texts. There was some consensus that teachers did not know a lot about available teenage fiction. Several teachers noted that they had not really developed their knowledge of teenage fiction since PGCE training although there is an acknowledgement that with knowledge comes the ability to make apposite and individual recommendations. Time and interest are given as reasons for not pursuing knowledge of texts.

One teacher was very aware of the possibility of parental reaction to recommending books which might contain dubious content, even though this was simply references to ‘poo’, even if the book very much appealed to reluctant readers. Another was reluctant to recommend texts which referred to social problems such as drug use.

For some teachers it was important that they enjoyed the book themselves; this was particularly true of class texts. Length of text and short chapters also influenced choice of text. Equally for some it was important that the book might serve some social purpose: linking with cross-curricular themes, encouraging female aspiration, informing about social issues amongst others. It was also felt to be important that a book for class use contained a teaching element; this might mean the possibility of activities or discussion or even the inclusion of grammatical features which might be used as models. One teacher talked of the need to give the skills of reading as a vital life skill. One teacher mentioned that there was a real difference between class and private reading texts since class texts needed to pass scrutiny.

Some teachers were resistant to teenage fiction on the grounds that it was badly written and they did not read it themselves. Where some teachers seek simplicity, others dismiss what they see as the simplicity of the prose in teenage fiction. However there was some belief expressed that students should be allowed a free range of texts and that they would eventually choose to move on to more challenging and interesting texts of their own accord. One teacher expressed real anger that enjoyment did not seem to figure in the curriculum.

It was felt that there was value in 11 – 16 year olds reading texts which allowed them, at some level, to be participant in a range of problems linked to their own growing up in order to see issues from the outside and that this was a valuable part of growing up.

4.7.2 Library

The Library is seen as a useful adjunct to the classroom where one may discuss, find or suggest texts, often at an individual level. It is often a case of looking for texts in situ rather than a systematic approach. This was mentioned by several teachers. However some schools do have booklists even if these are not updated as regularly as might be wished. Appearance of the library displays and the condition of the books was deemed important.

In conjunction with the library, awards such as the Carnegie were viewed as a safe way of getting recommendations of appropriate texts.

Pupils can be daunted by the library, however. One pupil noted the problems of coded censorship: she wanted to borrow a book from the library that she liked but was told it was in the KS4 section and she was too young for it. Other libraries actively supported the curriculum by stocking books which allowed pupils to explore authors or themes from class texts.

Several teachers were also aware that the library was an underused and undervalued resource. There was also a considerable disparity in views on library use and library effectiveness from schools where the library was integral to book choice to those where the library was badly stocked and badly used by staff and students.

4.7.3 Parents

Parents were viewed as looking for the kind of recommendations of books that they had read at school themselves, showing little awareness of contemporary texts. One teacher expressed surprise that her own ideas for books were more contemporary than those of the parents. However it was encouraging to note that some pupils saw their parents as valuable doorways to a real range of texts and viewed recommendations with pleasure. One pupil extolled the value of growing up in a text rich house and remembered early experiences of being read to;

another looked to her mother and trusted her for recommendations. Yet another pupil cited her father and her grandfather as influences on her reading.

Teachers were aware of content in text that might result in parental complaint and avoided recommending or teaching it if this might be the case. They were clear that there was a difference between what might be suitable for class use and what for private reading. There was also tension between parents' desire for independent reading to move pupils on and the teachers' desire for independent reading to promote pleasure in the reading process. Teachers did not want to put their students off reading.

4.7.4 Peers

Peer recommendation was seen as important by teachers and students. It was interesting to note that there was sometimes dissent between students over recommendations and they appeared to sometimes challenge each other to move outside their own comfort zone in terms of theme or author. In one school older students acted as mentors recommending books to younger students.

4.7.5 Bookshop and Publishers

Bookshops are seen as another source of texts but there is a passive attitude towards them in that teachers and students accept what appears on the shelf and the categories under which it is displayed; there is an awareness of the commercial aspect of books in the way they are marketed to appeal to the target audience. Marketing is often linked to details extraneous to the story such as film or other spin-off products.

4.7.6 Summary of Community

The community with influence on views of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds is diverse and the impact on choices of text made by both teachers and students is complex. What is notable is the complexity of the influence of the diverse members of the community on choices of fiction text for 11- 16 year olds. Table 4.7 illustrates, too, the hierarchy of the community and the influence of community

opinion or requirement. In the next sections I develop that complexity by illustrating how rules and responsibility are also highly significant in how choices of fiction for 11 -16 year olds are perceived. These impact considerably on how the work of fiction is conceptualised as a tool and indeed how the object of its use is interpreted. There is a tension here which will be explored more fully in Chapter 5, The Discussion.

4.8 Rules

There is a very clear overlap between rules and responsibilities in my analysis of the data. Often responsibilities are defined by both teachers and students in terms of the rules, which, in turn, are influenced by the community. Rules can be external, such as NC and GCSE requirements, and internal, such as school and departmental expectations. At times rules can be the part of the teachers' or students' own perception. Of these, the broad requirements of the curriculum and examinations appear to be most significant to the teacher. Whilst both rules and responsibilities impact considerably on teachers' thinking, apart from NC and examination iterations it appears that often teachers' thoughts are affected by how the community circles may respond to their actions. There is little, if any, mention of pedagogy as a defining rule or indeed as a principle behind responsibility.

4.8.1 Curriculum

The curriculum requirements evidently inform all aspects of choice of text for classroom use. This is axiomatic, both as a guiding external rule and principle but also evidently as a school and department imperative too. One teacher spoke of choosing a text for Yr7 which was *so perfect to study in a school environment* at the point of transition from primary to secondary school. Here the social needs of the class were paramount in the choice. On the other hand the existence of rape as part of the narrative in *Heroes* by Robert Cormier meant *you would never do it in Yr7*.

There was a perception that curriculum and educational imperatives might be incompatible with stimulating fiction:

> *I think as soon as educational issues become the guiding purpose behind writing a book then all the entertainment and the interest in it vanishes*
>
> *I thought what can I teach year 9, it's just so frustrating, I haven't got a quality book.*

One teacher did not mince their words in terms of the available curriculum choice of literature:

> *I think at KS4 the national curriculum in terms of literature is utterly appalling.*

Although, generally, this lack of exciting reading material was accepted as inevitable; one teacher said that you read (in class):

> *what you are told to teach or are given the option of teaching rather than actually going and seeking new books and things.*

There was resignation in this as well as compliance with rules.

Fulfilling curriculum requirements was also seen to stifle choice of text for use in the classroom:

> *That I choose it would be determined obviously by the National Curriculum the GCSE syllabus*

This diminution of choice for the curriculum applied at individual teacher level but also at department level. There was reference to limited choice and, as a corollary, several teachers talked about the entire department tending to do the same text with a certain year group. Where one teacher spoke of choosing a text that she enjoyed, she qualified this by explaining that it also fitted with the framework (curriculum) requirements. One teacher talked of downgrading texts from KS3 to KS4 following the introduction of a new Curriculum; by this she meant moving texts previously considered suitable for KS4 to KS3. Her rationale was simply because the curriculum demanded this; she did not question the appropriacy of the texts for the new audience.

Following curriculum requirements to, for example, study a pre-1914 novel also meant that it was likely that the whole text, for instance *Great Expectations*, would not be read in its entirety.

Often teachers referred to *doing* texts rather than reading them and, as will also be seen in the section on Tools (4.11), often saw texts in terms of what curriculum functions the text could achieve, such as predictive exercises or the potential to analyse sentence structure. One teacher began at the microscopic word level in looking at a book; her description is laced with words emanating from curriculum expectations such as metaphor and simile:

> *it's more the words and the writing and then we look at character and plot and similes and metaphors,*

For one teacher there was real concern that the curriculum did not explicitly address cultivating enjoyment in reading:

> *nowhere in the Curriculum does it say we should read stuff that we enjoy for the sake of reading stuff that we enjoy*

This teacher saw the curriculum as a straitjacket, the rules it embodies constricting. He goes on to say that he feels the *National Curriculum is absolute rubbish* in terms of its potential to encourage a love of literature or a desire to read for pleasure. He attributed this to the restricted and uninspiring choices of books and authors set out in the curriculum. Unlike the teachers who have embraced *doing a book*, this teacher would like students to be able to read for enjoyment without the pressure of *doing a load of homework on it*. This view was also expressed by the teacher who said:

> *…sometimes we do get carried away with what we think we ought to be teaching and what kids actually like to read.*

Another interpreted the edicts of the NC at KS3 more liberally:

> *If we are going to get kids reading which is the ultimate goal at KS3 we need to give them books which will lead on to other books.*

But this view of reading as the ultimate goal was unusual.

Curriculum rules can also apply in the library. One pupil in KS3 was discomfited when she was not allowed to take a book out of the library which was on the KS4 shelf. The only explanation the pupil was given was that she was too young to take the book out but the definition implies a curriculum or legal youth rather than a reading or emotional youth. One teacher was reluctant to interfere with or

intrude into private reading in any way.

4.8.2 Examinations

The examinations were seen as constraints. Getting students through examinations and maintaining department and school standards was deemed important. Apologies were made for choosing texts perceived as *easy* or *short* (*Of Mice and Men* for example).

> *I just read the recommendations for the new National Curriculum and it did mention there that 90% of the schools surveyed taught* Of Mice and Men as *a text and the reason for that as I said is easy identifiable themes, figure, characters…*

> *I love it but it is very, very easy and in our game we are jumping through hoops.*

Such choices were justified by both the students' enjoyment of the texts but also, crucially, their potential as successful examination texts too. The teacher above, who looked to texts as a means of exploring linguistic features, also viewed KS4 texts in terms of their GCSE grade potential:

> *I think when you get to KS4 the A stars are looking at what the writer's doing to you as a reader, because I think it's always gearing up to the KS4 A star.*

One teacher, who has also expressed their disgust at the lack of quality in the prescribed curriculum texts, also found the specific examination equally flawed:

> *the choices in the anthology are absolutely appalling.*

However another teacher viewed the new specifications in terms of her own enjoyment and the added freedom the new curriculum gave her. Although even here there was note of the examination performance constraints which limit even a perceived better choice of texts:

> *although there is more freedom around the new specifications we are still very much dictated to be controlled assessment and time.*

4.8.3 Parents

I noted the influence that potential adverse parental reaction can have on texts

chosen in school. One teacher expressed this very specifically in terms of the inappropriate vocabulary in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*. It was particularly reluctance to provoke such reaction that meant she would not do this book with certain groups:

> *I wouldn't dream of offering it to a Yr8 or a Yr7 because I think probably because I would get lots of letters in*

Both teachers and students were aware of the need to please parents, or at least to avoid conflict. I note in Section (4.7) parents' desire for children to read the classics; books they perceive as of worth.

4.8.4 Cultural capital

One teacher was explicit that he felt that part of his brief was to increase the students' access to cultural capital and that this was important. Without actually using the words cultural capital it was evident that other teachers also concurred with this view. One teacher spoke of a book *as news from a different time.* Here the book became almost a polemic, in the teacher's view, to disseminate the *ideas of its time*. There was a sense of opening the students' eyes to something beyond literature: *something is transmitted that they would not ordinarily have found*.

This same idea of giving young people access to knowledge through reading a novel beyond the story and its literary content, was also referred to as using literature in the classroom to engage 11 – 16 year olds with other cultures and historical perspectives; this is in itself a key aspect of both the NC and examination specifications. One teacher spoke of the importance of studying Orwell as *essential reading for anybody that wants to understand politics in this country,* where the outcomes were clearly historical and cultural in addition to literary.

In considering reasons for studying a text, another teacher mentioned that it *allowed her* to bring things out about religion. Another spoke of certain books being opportunities for students to explore their own mortality or gain greater understanding of significant world events such as Hiroshima. *The Boy in Striped*

Pyjamas was seen as allowing young people, who thought it could not happen to them, to actually see the horror of the Holocaust through the eyes and experiences of a child similar in age to themselves. Similarly *Private Peaceful* was an opportunity to learn about World War 1, not just in terms of war but also in terms of the role of women at the time.

4.8.5 The canon

Giving students access to recognised works and authors in the canon of English Literature is encapsulated by NC and examination requirements (Shakespeare, pre-1912 prose and poetry texts…). However not all teachers view it with pleasure

> *the canon I just think it fills me with dismay – you know?*

And there appears to be lack of clarity about what precisely constitutes the canon, what are the classics reflecting findings in the original questionnaire:

> *some teachers express their views that there are certain texts that all kids ought to read but they can't actually list those but what they do say is the classics but then they disagree on what constitutes a classic.*

Yet another teacher was more pragmatic, viewing the canon as another list of potential resources. She allowed that she herself did not enjoy all of these books but would choose books from the canon to use in the classroom which she herself found enjoyable. A further teacher was realistic about her own view of the canon which had emanated from her own degree background. She was keen to provide a mixed diet which included the classics but also contemporary literature, whilst conceding that at examination level students should be made aware of the classics.

Parents seemed to use the classics as a touchstone in discussions with teachers about suitable books for their own children to read. Discussions with parents about appropriate books for their children to read, often centred on titles from the canon. This fitted with a perception that the parents were valuing books they had read at school themselves as the most valuable literary diet for their children.

The dilemma was encapsulated by a Yr8 girl who said:

> *I don't read classic books because they are so boring looking but I know that* Animal Farm *is good*

Interestingly she did not specify how she knew about this particular book and its merit.

Another teacher presented it as a given that class texts would be from the range of what she termed the classics, whereas recommendations for personal reading might be more contemporary. She saw recommendations for private reading as being more wide ranging possibly, but not of necessity, including suggestions from the classics.

One teacher liked the idea of having more freedom to personalise recommendations for private reading and found it easier to include what she saw as classics amongst her recommendations. However even here one of her motivations was to challenge and extend the individual reader; enjoyment was not mentioned.

For several teachers the problem of the accessibility of classics, particularly, nineteenth century novels was problematic. One teacher noted that whilst nineteenth century novels were probably accessible to the literate audience of the time, that literacy was now different. One pupil also shared this view, though expressed it in terms of not approaching *Wuthering Heights*, for example, until you were older. Another pupil linked her knowledge of classics (here *The Railway Children* and *The Secret Garden*) to films: until her mum told her she had no idea that these film narratives were preceded by a book.

4.8.6 Summary of Rules

The rules are variously and sometimes idiosyncratically interpreted by both teachers and students. Whilst the curriculum and examination imperatives are clear, other aspects of rules are often down to individual interpretation of expectations which in turn link to perceptions of responsibility and community requirements; members of particular institutions can be seen to share ideas about

what is important and these ideas may vary noticeably from institution to institution. This complexity will be developed theoretically in Chapter 5 with reference to boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Wenger, 1998; Engeström and Sannino, 2010; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009) and schooled attitudes (Street, 1993). In the next section I will illustrate the way in which the data revealed how perceptions of responsibility affect perceptions of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds.

4.9 Responsibility

There is a clear overlap between rules, community and responsibility, as I have already demonstrated. Of these three the precise nature of responsibility is less clearly defined and is dependent on the external forces of rules and community. Responsibility can be defined more in terms of consequences for not applying / understanding the requirements of the perceived rules and needs of the community than as a positive force. At individual level, it is notable that teachers frequently define their own responsibility towards choice of text in terms of community expectations.

4.9.1 Teachers

Some teachers can seem reluctant to bring their own ideas to text choice for class use. A teacher, in her second year of teaching, said:

> *I think you kind of read what you are told to teach or are given the option of teaching rather than actually going and seeking new books and things.*

In the same school this view was reinforced by a teacher of similar service length, who was explicit about where she saw the responsibility lying:

> *They're all set out on our schemes of work so our Head of Department and KS3 co-ordinator ….which books to read….*

Heads of Department in the sample reinforced the view of the class teachers, seeing themselves as having some responsibility for overseeing choice of text and possible recommendations:

> *I think we probably just need to as heads of department need to be on top of it or at least they need to nominate or encourage someone to be the reading champion and they need to know enough books to say this is really good and this is good because of this particular reason you might like to check that out.*

School limitations can also affect choice of class text. This may relate to inflexibility of the curriculum or to what is available in the stock cupboard. It may also relate to the perceived needs of certain abilities:

> *I know in* Private Peaceful *we use that's really good with top sets*

However there appeared to be a perception in some of the sample that there was more individual freedom in recommending private reading. It was interesting to note enthusiasm from a young teacher disaffected by the limitations on choice of class text express a professional responsibility in relation to private reading recommendations:

> *Well I really like reading children's literature I think it's important to be up to date with what's coming out so that you can recommend it to the students*

The difference between responsibility for the choice of class text and private reading book was clearly expressed by another teacher:

> *…a novel that I teach in class has to sustain close scrutiny.*

This *close scrutiny* is not explained precisely but would seem to link to the school and wider community. This is linked to the existence in some schools of a book list for private reading recommendations:

> *We have traditionally done it through book lists.*

However the responsibility of maintaining and updating the book list might remain amorphous, categorised by expressing the responsibility in terms of the ubiquitous *we*:

> *they are ones that we've compiled and they're…I don't know when we did that last one you need them constantly updated*

and I would have thought it would be and this is something that we are working on at the moment.

One teacher expressed her professional responsibilities in terms of a business, implying contractual responsibilities:

We are in the business of challenging them to read.

In similar vein another spoke of looking for *the quality of the response* rather than the *quality of the text* for use in class.

Another noted a stagnation in the stock cupboard:

I think it is a shame that you know we are still doing the same stuff, that's what I used to.

A further issue described was the need to find texts which would appeal to both genders, with the need to motivate boy readers seen as a particular concern.

4.9.2 Curriculum

Within the section on Teachers, *4.9.1* above, I referred to the limitations on individual teachers in respect of choice of text. This recently qualified teacher encapsulates a view expressed by others regarding how the needs of the curriculum restrict choice. In this instance the restriction is due to internal, school or departmental, requirements:

There's only like a few ones that we do in KS3 so it's more limited I guess because we only study one book a year with them.

In Yr 7, I think, I mean we all tend to do kind of Private Peaceful*.*

Another prevalent view was the effect of the wider curriculum. This was where the choice of class text gave the opportunity to relate to cross curricular themes and topics:

It takes an element of this of sort of about in history and takes elements of, often there are debates about war debates and things they pick up on so maybe in PSE or RE, and lots of other things around the curriculum that they've been studying.

The curriculum was seen as a barrier to choice of text. There was a resignation in one teacher's comment:

> *That I choose it would be determined obviously by the National Curriculum or the GCSE syllabus.*

This idea of being helplessly limited in choice of text by external agencies was a repeated theme:

> *I would have very little choice at KS4 at KS4 it would be part of a discussion with the rest of the colleagues in my department so I would have very little choice.*

A HoD in the sample linked to this when he expressed his own view that the HoD had a responsibility to oversee choice of class text in order to ensure consistency in the opportunities offered to pupils through the school:

> *I think what you get when you look back over a child's experience across a secondary school experience especially at KS3 is that you sometimes find that one child actually has had a much more challenging diet than another child and that's not related to their reading ability it's related to something completely different the sort of randomness of who their teacher was and what they thought was a good choice.*

This same HoD was clear that it was the HoD's responsibility to ensure that books read in class were being read for a *good reason.* This good reason was often linked to what could be achieved by the book in class rather than the quality of the actual text:

> *So it's the study of it which is more important in terms of interest rather than the original text.*

He saw the acquisition of the skills of reading as key, linking these to future life skills. However this same teacher was more ambivalent about influencing the private reading of students; perhaps because of the tight control exerted over the choice of class texts. Another teacher saw curriculum reading in English as having the purpose of giving the pupil skills to succeed in other areas of the curriculum as well.

For one teacher the curricular requirements were also linked, with a degree of anger, to professional performance requirements, perhaps reflecting the views of the HoD above:

> *I love it but it is very, very easy and in our game we are jumping through hoops.*

In this instance the pleasure in reading a text which the teacher enjoyed and liked was counter balanced by the view that reading it allowed ready achievement of professional expectations.

There was also some anger at this perceived restriction on a teacher being permitted personal and professional choice in text:

> *The other thing is nowhere in the curriculum does it say we should read stuff that we enjoy for the sake of reading stuff that we enjoy.*

Even where there was some praise for the new curriculum it was linked to more flexibility in the choice of texts rather than any inherent values in the type of choices:

> *I am enjoying the new specification now because it's allowed us to teach other texts.*

And this same teacher modifies pleasure in a wider range of text by later indicating that the responsibility for a text choice is limited by the need to fulfil wider curriculum requirements relating to the eventual examination:

> *..although there is more freedom around the new specifications we are still very much dictated to be controlled assessment and time.*

Another teacher embraced the possibility of making personal decisions about what texts to teach, although still placing this choice within the wider requirements of the curriculum:

> *I want to get them through their GCSE and I want those things that we need in order to try and get them through those exams and get them literate I don't care what it is really as long as it's not morally offensive.*

This view was reiterated even more strongly by another teacher in the sample. This teacher saw his responsibility as primarily ensuring that the students passed the GCSE examination and became broadly literate. The only responsibility is that the choice of text lies in avoiding any potential to offend morally; though the criteria for this are not given.

For some, the curricular responsibility lay in giving young people access to wider culture although this again could be seen as defined by the rules of wider society:

> *..as well to kind of study something from, in inverted commas, the canon*
>
> *..I think it adds to the cultural capital of a class.*

Teachers throughout the sample saw provision of time for private reading within the classroom as important; there was some consensus in this across schools in the sample. However there was confliction about giving the students complete responsibility for what they might read:

> *I have noticed this all over most teachers actually feel a huge pressure they can't justify the time and yet they also feel at the moment that they need to go back to it because there's this close correlation between love of reading and success in school.*

4.9.3 Library

There is tacit acceptance and understanding of the Library as a place to access books. However in the sample there is a range of attitude towards the library, the Librarian and the mutual responsibility in giving access to texts for, generally, private reading.

A HoD in the sample saw that his remit extended to overseeing the choice of teenage fiction which was stocked in the school library as well as for departmental use:

> *..maybe make sure that Heads of Department oversee the stocking of teenage fiction in the school library.*

Whilst there was praise for good librarians, there was very limited reference to liaison between teachers and librarians beyond the provision of booklists,

overseeing ordering of texts and encouraging some librarians to code books according to the Key Stages. There was general agreement that school libraries gave students access to a range of texts for private reading but no consistency in ways of using the library productively beyond looking through the shelves and making recommendations. Several teachers bemoaned the fact that students often did not read a whole book but did not see how they could encourage this beyond recommending texts students might like.

Some schools ran an Accelerated Reading Scheme and this was often situated within the library. The books for the scheme were in demarcated sections of the library and the students would use library computers for the assessment. This was an interesting use of the library and moved it firmly into the area of the curriculum.

4.9.4 Students

In some instances students are given some responsibility for choosing texts for both class and private reading, though more commonly for private reading. One teacher gave the class a choice of three texts to choose from for the class book; though it has to be said that the initial three texts were in themselves part of the curriculum. One teacher had mentors from Yr11 recommending books to younger students. Slightly disturbing was the rider this teacher added that they asked mentors to take on this role, having very little idea of what to suggest themselves.

Being able to share and enjoy talking about books with friends was seen as important by the students interviewed and as something to encourage by the teachers. Some teachers actively found time for this, although there was a regret from others that other curriculum pressure meant this did not happen often. Where teachers encouraged students to discuss books there was seen to be a value in allowing students to disagree with the teacher and defend their own views. Students described their own book choices more in terms of plot, author or series.

There was a sense from teachers that it was important to enable students to make their own book choices for private reading. Some teachers were happy for students to begin a journey into more demanding reading by engagement with

magazines or what might be termed lightweight fiction. However one teacher was discomfited by the prevalence of such popular texts as the *Goosebump* or *Twilight* series in private reading sessions; this was more from personal dislike of these books than an overweening sense of curriculum failure in allowing them. The students themselves had a strong sense of what they enjoyed reading and were generally happy to make their own choices, often using peer recommendations as a starting point. They showed an awareness of each other's likes and dislikes and they took responsibility for their own choices. They were less enthusiastic than teachers about library choices being limited by Key Stages and wanted to be given the responsibility to make their own choices.

4.9.5 Summary of Responsibility

On the one hand teachers felt a strong responsibility to uphold curriculum and examination requirements. Responsibility, or division of labour, for selecting texts at school level was less clear cut; this included library stock. Often decision-making about choices of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for both use in class and for private reading was linked to perceived rules and responsibilities and this could be at institutional level. Whilst students were less constrained by rules or responsibilities, they had much less power to make decisions about what they read, particularly about texts for class use.

However in previous sections I have demonstrated that the work of fiction for 11-16 year olds is seen as a powerful artefact with the power not just to support examination success but also to add to many areas of educational success and progress from progress in literacy skills to cultural capital. In the next sections I consider the object of the work of fiction and how it is conceptualised as a tool; in terms of CHAT where the tool is the artefact through which the object may be achieved. In the next section I develop that complexity by illustrating how the object of the fiction text has many conceptualisations which in turn impact on views of quality.

4.10 Object

The subjects in terms of CHAT are teachers and students. Whilst they often participate in a shared object, they may not necessarily share in wanting the same object. I have identified that students' object in reading may be purely for enjoyment; this is rarely the object for the teachers. In terms of CHAT this links to Edwards (2011) and the significance of identifying the values and purposes for any activity; in this case using fiction both in the classroom and for reading for pleasure.

The object includes both purpose and expectations of reading books. As I have already noted, curriculum, examination and learning requirements will mean that the work of fiction will have many purposes, or objects. There will be the umbrella expectation to develop intellectual skills, knowledge and curiosity. There may also be an imperative to encourage pleasure in reading. However this is often disguised as a desire to improve literacy and this has a purpose that is more linked to the acquisition of skills. Sometimes purpose will include classroom and learning activities which may arise from a reading of the book. The activities can take precedence over the book content although they may be intrinsically linked to the story, such as discussions on the theme of a book. The object is not straightforward or single focus. It is influenced by tools available and particularly by community and perceptions of rules, and responsibility, as has been shown in the preceding sections.

4.10.1 Curriculum

The rules of the curriculum, influenced by the policy makers in the outer circle of the community and by the community circles in school beyond the individual teacher and pupil, emerged as significant in how the object was conceptualised.

4.10.1.1 Curriculum and examinations

The rules and responsibilities imposed by interpreting the curriculum at an internal school and department level and also at an external compliance level

were evident in teachers' responses. The interviews were being conducted by myself, a recognised teacher trainer, and the teachers on school premises. This implies some collusion in professional interests. Nevertheless it was significant how often texts were mentioned primarily in terms of the Year or KS group with whom they might be used, for example, a Yr7, Yr9 or Yr11 text or *Holes at KS3.* A teacher explained this as *jumping through hoops*. Texts were chosen because they represented a route into fulfilling a curriculum requirement. One teacher explained how a text could be used at KS3 or KS4 and the curriculum approach would be different. She does not mention the appropriacy of the narrative:

> *but if you were to then teach it for KS4 the way you would approach it would be entirely different because at KS3 as much as you go into writer's viewpoint and writer's, yeah, you stick to the story and what, whereas when you were then to take it to KS4 you would be like right ok what about this voice, what are we learning and what is the irony here and things like that.*

There can be conflict between what the teacher would like to include and the curriculum limitations; the curriculum is key:

> *It's really nice to have something that they can think, that makes them question things and makes them question their own judgement and I think that, I'd really want more of that in the curriculum.*

Another teacher put this succinctly as the *quality of the response being more important than the quality of the text* and of needing to get things out of the text beyond enjoyment.

However one teacher did admit:

> *…but sometimes we do get carried away with what we think we ought to be teaching and what kids actually like to read.*

There was a sense that the quantity of reading was important too. This was seen to have a potential impact on the rest of the curriculum:

> *I think quantity of reading is really important for students because if they get access, if they get exposure to lots of words that seems to make a big difference across the curriculum in everything really. I see their love of reading as being a sort of conduit to success at school.*

The need to get students through examinations successfully was key to the thinking of most teachers in terms of outcomes. Teachers railed against the restrictions imposed by the need to support pupils in getting good results:

> *I want to get them through their GCSE and I want but those things that we need in order to try and get them through those exams.*

Nevertheless this was key in their thinking.

4.10.2 Providing Challenge

Challenge is referred to frequently by teachers; less often by students, although the students do also show awareness that reading fiction can provide them with a variety of intellectual or even emotional challenges. When teachers employ this expression they usually refer to the potential of a text to provide the potential to develop a student's understanding: this may be in intellectual terms, in knowledge or even emotionally. Teachers are aware that a text of quality may offer a variety of challenges to a range of pupils.

Providing a variety of challenges through the choice of text was very important to the teachers. These challenges included developing reading interest and skills; extending knowledge of an author, a genre or a theme; developing writing skills through reading; developing knowledge of linguistic and literary techniques; and extending vocabulary. This was a commonly held view, encapsulated by one teacher:

> *I think in class books really should be chosen because they are quite difficult I mean I think that's the whole point that if you do it together as a class the books really ought to be more difficult than they could read on their own.*

This teacher went on to define the challenge she sought as related to the linguistic content or the structure. One teacher added the caveat that it was possible for the degree of challenge in class text to vary from student to student, depending on the teacher and, more widely, this can also be linked to department and school.

Students seemed to understand that teachers tried to set challenges in the books

they selected for class use, and probably private reading too:

> *I reckon the teachers always choose books that are challenging.*

Pupils were also perceptive about teachers' choice of texts and also agreed that a well-crafted plot could sustain interest:

> *Some of the books we read in class didn't really interest me but some of them have like the one that we read at the minute it is not really interesting me but it is still exciting.*

Teachers were very aware of the need to choose a text for use in class that would fit with the rules, appeal to a wide range of pupils by ability and gender and also provide a range of challenges to the pupils:

> *Yes I think there's a lot of text that you can differentiate quite nicely, you can read them as a nice story but you can go further and actually think about language techniques and how it's structured.*

Of Mice and Men was cited frequently as a text which offered levels of challenge appropriate to a class with a range of abilities:

> *They engage with the story and characters but if you look closely at some of the imagery and some of the language and how it's kind of built up with fore shadowing, you can extend the more able as well, so I really enjoyed teaching that because the kids enjoy it but they can also be challenged by it.*

One teacher assessed her ability to provide a book of sufficient narrative challenge by setting a predictive exercise at an early stage of the reading. If nobody could accurately complete the exercise she knew she had chosen a book with a plot of sufficient complexity. The possibility for added challenge encouraged one teacher with a top set Yr8 to move outside the departmental prescribed texts and try something different. She described the challenge as both language and topic complexity. It also allowed for a greater range of class discussion, something the class enjoyed. Another teacher concurred with this view:

> *To kind of challenge them to think about books in maybe a different way than just the story.*

Others agreed with the need for plot challenge. It was felt that some kind of unresolved mystery / dilemma which kept students guessing was more important than complicated language which might make the book difficult to read. In some instances challenge was also expressed in terms of potential outcomes from reading a text:

> *…so whether that's kind of an excitement or a maturity that it generates in them or even that it's just a buzz that they feel having read or something they can really get stuck into.*

Structurally, multiple narrative perspectives were also seen to offer challenge:

> *…use of an unreliable narrator so the reader knows more than the central character does and that I think is fairly challenging for students.*

One teacher explained that she saw the challenge more in terms of cultural capital, engaging pupils with other lives and experiences and helping them learn to display empathy:

> *I like novels which take them to a different history, a different period which challenge them to engage empathetically with characters with whom they initially have nothing in common and that's very, very important to me.*

This same teacher also extended the view expressed above to include texts offering the challenge of being able to engage with philosophical issues, clearly beyond the immediate curricular requirements:

> *The other thing I really like is when a novel challenges you to be quite philosophical..* Skellig.. *David Almond he'll do that……..*
> *……. the fact that that novel facilitates that conversation is absolutely amazing – a novel which will deal with something that's difficult to define in life and challenge you to think about it is brilliant.*

Another teacher had a similar viewpoint:

> *Those very challenging things can be brought out about religion.*

Teachers saw that the need to challenge students in their reading extended beyond the choice of class texts. There was a genuine sense of this challenge also being applied to the students' private reading too:

> *I worry that the books and just not as challenging now……. we are in the business of challenging them to read and not just read magazines or not to just be online*

However with this came an understanding that if a private reading text were overly challenging, it might lead to the student simply giving up. This linked to the comment of the teacher above about class texts needing to be more challenging than a student might attempt by itself. One teacher saw this as a delicate balance between recommending books which would prevent the student getting bored and being so overzealous in the matter of the student's private reading that the teacher might put them off. It seemed to be important that teachers had some knowledge of available teenage fiction so that they did not make inappropriate recommendations:

> *When they don't know much about books though, and that's many teachers I think there's a real danger that they keep trying to push kids into reading difficult books.*

Above all the students themselves embraced challenge in both private and class reading.

4.10.3 Reader response

Both teachers and students spoke of books making them think. This can link to wider issues and themes which the books embody; for the teachers the thinking is the intention, for students the result. For one student the emotional response made a book live on in her memory. One student talked about wanting *to escape to another world* through reading. Some expressed this as the book being *so nice* that *you just don't want to leave*. Another spoke eloquently about the effect of a well described book on her;

> *You are just taking everything that it's describing and putting it all into your head it is kind of running like a film in your head.*

One teacher also agreed with the effect of a well described text:

> *..to get them, their imagination going and just get the glued to a book I think is way more important that if it's written really well.*

Students were confident to admit that they cried about books; in fact they compared notes on the books that made them cry and the extent to which they

cried. One student spoke of having an audible dialogue with characters whilst she was reading. Students also liked to share and recommend books that affected them strongly. These books were primarily private reading. Students enjoyed empathising with characters:

> *You are with the person who is in the book you are going through what he is going through at the moment.*

> *It's just like something happens like that I can relate to which make me quite upset and makes me cry about it because I remember what it was like, they are talking about in the book you start finding out about their lives and their history and stuff so you really like, you can almost, if they were to come to real life you will be able to start a really good conversation with them.*

Yet another student explained how they read until late at night because they had got into the books and *like I was that character*. The characters and how they were presented was very important to the students. Other students explained how they liked to get fully involved in the emotion of a book. The idea of *getting into* a character seemed important. One student explained that this could make her feel *quite scared*.

A teacher explained this kind of emotional engagement in terms of *Private Peaceful*, explaining that the students *love* Tommo and they *love* Charlie. Another student explained this engagement by saying that she had known them for ages *even if they were characters in a book*. This seemed to be emotionally sustaining for one student who explained that if there was someone you could relate to *you don't feel by yourself*.

Being fully engaged with a book seemed to give real pleasure. It was the idea of being inside rather than outside the pages. One student described this emotional response very eloquently:

> *…but I just found it so interesting and I could see the scenes in my head and I was just like everything around me I was just in it with them, I really like it when it does that.*

Reactions to class text seemed different. Interestingly however, one teacher had found a problem with students laughing inappropriately in class at the end of

emotionally charged novels such *as Of Mice and Men* or *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*.

One teacher spoke about her desire to elicit an emotional response:

> *I want the child to actually feel a response, we look at feelings a lot and actually, so the idea that there is no right or wrong answer quite often it is, well what's your impression from those words, how do you feel when you hear those words.*

This is an interesting contrast to the more frequently expressed desire of the teachers to achieve curriculum learning from the texts they give to students. However the learning focus is deep within teachers because the same teacher modified the opinion expressed above in this way:

> *…and so I am looking for, for how a child responds emotionally but obviously there is an intellectual aspect in knowledge of word meanings if you like.*

And another teacher stated that if a book left students thinking about wider issues it *had done the job*. Some students endorsed the teacher's view. They were from an entirely different school.

It makes us think more.

It makes us think.

It was interesting to hear that some class texts fully engaged the students:

> *I just want to stay in there like sometimes in English when we are reading a book then the bell rings and I am like Oh damn I want to carry on reading it.*

4.10.4 Learning

Teachers had clear learning purposes for using text in the classroom; these were often very specific. These learning purposes varied from meeting examination, curricular or school syllabus demands (Curriculum, *4.8.1*) to allowing particular teaching approaches; exposing students to a range of literature was also mentioned by some. Examination, curriculum and syllabus requirements included covering both text specific features such as narrative, character or theme and

also wider linguistic feature such as sentence structure, vocabulary metaphor and simile. For some teachers a close interrogation of how a story was written enabled students to improve their own creative writing.

> *So we've talked about lots of books that have interesting structural features like flashback and multiple narratives and things, so things like that, that kind of show how an author can craft a story and actually they can then apply it to their own creative writing as well.*

There appeared to be a difference between KS3, where learning was narrative driven, and KS4 where questions on the text might focus particularly on literary devices such as irony or voice.

4.10.5 Literary techniques

Examination preparation meant that teachers had to help the students learn to identify and discuss the construct of texts. One teacher was very clear *that I want to get out things like narrative style, methods of narrative.* In one school, however, the need to respond to the text for the examination conflicted with pleasure:

> *Our A/A* were terribly worried about responding to text.*

It was interesting to note how students discussed their reading using literary terms such as, for example, *first person, dramatic irony.* It was evident that students had been thoroughly instructed about literary technique when one group said that they like to see *dramatic irony* in texts they read, explaining this as the audience knowing something that the characters do not.

4.10.6 Authorial technique

Teachers were looking to explore a range of authorial techniques through the use of text. These techniques related to examination and curriculum learning requirements but also to improving the reading experience and engagement. Several teachers sought books with a degree of unpredictability, *twists* or *hints of* what is to come. This links to curriculum requirements to explore inference and also to delivering skills which students may apply to their own writing. *Noughts*

and Crosses is a popular choice of text and this is partly because it disrupts racist preconceptions from the outset. The narrative structure of *Private Peaceful*, another popular choice at KS3, provides a similar element of carefully constructed narrative surprise and shock. The parallel plots of *Holes* also provide valuable examples of the author's craft.

It is often posited that how to construct endings is a skill less well taught in English in terms of students' writing. Several teachers noted that Roald Dahl short stories provided skilful examples of twists at the end of a story.

One teacher, keen to use texts to help students' writing, was trying to find a way to include Carol Shields' *Happenstance*, a complex adult novel of married relationships, because the physical layout of the book might provide inspiration. This novel is in two halves to reflect the husband and wife's perspectives on the relationship. The reader needs to physically flip the book to access the other half. He also liked the way that in this novel there is no clear starting point: either half can provide the opening and the choice of where to start may in itself alter the reader's ultimate response to events. Other teachers were less precise but wanted a text where they were able to comment on diverse elements of structure. Students also liked an element of surprise built in, either in openings or twists throughout. They were also keen that a story moved on with *different things in each chapter.* It was evident that students recognised authors' techniques when one student spoke fluently and accurately about *dramatic irony*.

Texts which were carefully crafted were also valuable for allowing differentiation and providing challenge for a range of pupils in the class.

4.10.7 Plot structure

There was considerable reference to particular techniques used by the author to engage and hold the reader. Cliff-hangers were mentioned often as devices to keep student readers interested in the plot; teachers also expressed a preference for plots enlivened by the surprise or challenge that cliff-hangers presented. Students also generally liked cliff hangers, citing Roald Dahl as an entertaining

and skilled exponent of this device; although one student stated that she didn't like *books that take forever to get to the main plot* and another expressed her absolute aversion to cliff hangers:

> *I hate cliff hangers.*

This student was in the minority. Other students enjoyed cliff-hangers and showed a certain sophistication in their understanding of narrative structure in endorsing the use of a cliff-hanger at the end of a chapter, or even at the end of a book in the case of a series.

However one teacher looked for cliff-hangers which extended beyond just the plot:

> *I don't just mean that in terms of action in narrative, I'm talking about emotional and everything like that so that you really keep those kids really engaged.*

Demonstrating the use of the class text as tool for personal, as well as literary, growth.

Ambiguity in plot direction was also noted as an authorial technique which could help sustain interest and attention. Alongside cliff hangers, flashbacks were also considered to be a subtle way of engaging attention. One teacher mentioned the time shifts in a novel such as *Private Peaceful* because it meant that the students had to keep looking back at previous incidents, such as the finding of the watch, and reassess the significance in the light of the new information. Students endorsed this:

> *You could start off with something going on straight away and then say something about what was going to happen in the book and then go to what you said at the start try and do that it makes it grab your attention.*

And, like the teachers, referred to *Private Peaceful* as using this techniques particularly effectively.

Students certainly like plots that kept moving:

> *Different things in each chapter*
>
> *It has to move on.*

The actual structure of the book was considered important and both teachers and students favoured short chapters. One teacher explained that what she wanted to get out of a book was *narrative techniques.* Another expressed this as wanting a book with an element of narrative challenge.

Holes is a very popular class text and one teacher liked the possibility for imagination that the holes in the narrative give:

> *I love that readers fill in the gaps and so I love those little tricks.*

Teachers valued a traditional story structure with a beginning, middle and end although a twist was welcomed to prevent predictability. Pace was welcomed, as was drama or a dramatic ending; building tension was another way of describing the need for drama. Some playing around with narrative, *being experimental*, was also welcomed. One teacher talked about a cyclical structure: *Holes* was an example, short chapters and a cycle of events.

4.10.8 Characters

Well drawn characters to whom students could relate were important. As with cliff hangers it was felt that the slow building up of a character was important so that students wanted to read on to discover what happened to them next. Strong characters were important.

Differing, unreliable or multi narrative perspectives were considered important by more than one teacher and often linked to challenge. A child narrator enabled students to see things from another perspective.

Students did not want too many characters and preferred that they included teenagers:

> *It is more focussed on like one or two characters.*
>
> *The characters should be like basically how a teenager should be.*

One teacher spoke of the need for *multi-faceted* characters who develop and change, perhaps morally, in relation to circumstances in the book. Interestingly

flawed characters who were neither good nor evil were seen as more realistic. Another liked characters such as Pip or Magwitch in *Great Expectations* where there was a sense of moral ambiguity: *you never quite know*. Complex characters provided an opportunity for discussion and for students to consider choices, decisions made and consequences. In teenage fiction, with teenage protagonists, adult figures were sometimes seen by the teachers as authority figures providing moral compass.

Whilst teenage protagonists were considered important, students on the whole liked to read about children older than themselves.

4.10.9 Themes and issues

Teachers looked for books which had themes which might provoke wider discussion and link to other curricular subjects. Racism was mentioned in relation to several books, eg *Noughts and Crosses*, as were books about war or the Holocaust.

There was an awareness that many of the books chosen for class use embraced teenage issues. Some teachers were ambivalent about the value of this and saw it as less engaging at KS4. One teacher saw class texts as an opportunity to cover and explore adult themes in safety:

> *.. spell out big adult themes that kids start to get an inkling of and to understand but at a safe distance rather than have it shoved into their own faces and their own lives.*

Another was keen to choose themes which related to the students' lives in terms of wider issues.

Students were aware of the prevalence of issues-based teenage fiction. They were able to identify recurrent themes such as family problems, relationships, drugs and so on. One student thought that you could apply the book to your own life *and maybe it's changed you*; others agreed with the value of real life plots. Another student was less convinced of the necessity for stories about problems of puberty and growing up. It was evident from the detailed descriptions of plot

lines that some of the real life stories had made a real impact on some readers, mainly girls. It was evident that some readers, girls again, revelled in reading really hard-hitting issues based texts.

One teacher, on the other hand sometimes found the issues *irksome*, acknowledging that this was from an adult perspective. Another was concerned that she had a lack of experience to tackle such complex topics as drugs in class, which might arise from teaching an issues based text. Another teacher described issues such as drugs, sex and murder as *raw*. Yet another wanted to move students away from mundane everyday life and its problems through fiction. On the other hand it was felt that less controversial topics, such as homelessness, allowed teachers to help their students understand situations beyond their immediate experience.

However both students and teachers agreed that there was value in being able to work out complex problems through the medium of fiction and valued the distance fiction gave to the discussion and consideration of real life problems.

4.10.10 Language

The quality of the language was important. One teacher noted how Morpurgo uses simple words to convey complex ideas and emotions:

> *I think Morpurgo's sophistication is combination of words rather than using more difficult words I think that's where he's pitched it to younger audience by his clever use of language rather than impressive vocabulary.*

One teacher spoke of looking for an *original voice* in a book. Another wanted good description so that the students could both apply the techniques to their own writing but also gain new vocabulary at the individual word level. Yet another teacher wanted linguistic challenge. Another saw looking at language techniques as an effective way to differentiate work on a text for the more able, moving this group beyond simple narrative. This view was expanded by another teacher who also saw looking at linguistic techniques as an opportunity to differentiate

approaches to the text for higher ability students. This teacher also specified the linguistic features in terms of imagery, extended metaphor and individual language choices.

The teacher who noted Morpurgo's use of simple words also linked the power of language to his own writing. He had fully engaged with the precision of the writing but did not have the same impetus to explore this with the students:

> *I think, as somebody who tries to write myself I think you get the impression when you read a book of that sort of quality that it's almost like putting a poem together where every single word counts and you get the impression, or I get the impression when I read* Private Peaceful *that every single word in that sentence counts and it's there for a particular reason and if it wasn't that word he would have changed it, put another word in, and it's that 60, 70 thousand word attention to detail really that I think makes it so rich.*

For one teacher, *Private Peaceful*, with its plot flashbacks, led to some structured grammatical work on past and present tenses. Another talked about using text to explain how adjectives worked.

One teacher thought that a class text opened students to new words and thus to widening their own vocabulary; she found that they were willing to ask the meaning of unfamiliar words in books studied in class. Another teacher would expect to see more sophisticated vocabulary in teenage fiction: *raising the bar*. A group of students liked to learn new words but also looked *for powerful* or *passionate* vocabulary.

Of Mice and Men was cited by teachers as being particularly good for demonstrating how to set a scene then build characters and finally for the dialogue; all these aspects could be translated into the students' own writing. Another teacher noted that examination specifications demanded that students respond to the language of a text. A well-chosen book, such as *Of Mice and Men*, with its easily understood descriptive and linguistic devices, enabled discussion about what language meant for examination purposes.

Students also appreciated the way a good writer could engage their imagination through use of language. One student's appreciation for good writing was in itself a masterpiece of language use:

> *This writing just seems to have flown more even though it's just like no breaks at all, it adds more to the excitement and it flows, it's all calm though, it shows like the pictures in the actual writing as like if you say like the wings were like fluttering like the angels I don't know but like that and it's just like showed the picture in your mind with the words actually on the page and you are thinking wow that's really good.*

Teachers liked a literary complexity in the linguistic construction of the novel. One teacher noted how Robert Cormier set a rapist character in a decaying and dissolute environment to represent the degradation of his character.

It was pleasing to note that some students preferred words to illustrations so that their own imaginations could do the work:

> *I love books that don't have pictures, and then you have your own idea of the person and how they look.*

Students could be perceptive about the quality of writing. One student commented on how Jacqueline Wilson's novels had a uniformity of style, voice, character and even storylines. Whilst this could appear implicitly negative, it seemed to be offered as a factual statement rather than a critical comment. Another wanted books to be written in *daily words, not words we use once or twice a week.* This was in contrast to the teacher who was less enthusiastic about the vernacular. There were references to teachers wanting books to be *well-written* and *grammatically correct;* one teacher preferred books not to be in the *vernacular.* However these ideas were touched on and were not predominant in any interview.

Similarly one teacher valued the power of descriptive language: *it's mind-blowingly visual but he takes time to describe*. Another modified the need to learn from the text by expressing a sense that a text should get the students' imaginations going so that they are *glued to a book*.

4.10.11 Writing

Teachers wanted texts that stood the test of time and the test of revisiting year after year:

> *I think I want some text that is actually rich enough to explore not just all ranges of students in the classroom but to come back the following year and find new things and come back the next year and find new things and it's layer on layer.*

Another teacher looked for a range of skills from a good writer:

> *It's funny it's inventive it's creative it's mind-blowingly visual but he takes time to describe.*

Leadenness of sentence structure, conversely was berated, with the works of Benjamin Zephaniah cited as examples of this.

For a child good writing enabled them to visualise events and people clearly:

> *Really good for me has to been eye grabbing and yet brain…like my brain had got the pictures in my head and that's why I describe it really good.*

Another student described how well drawn characters helped her to get inside the book:

> *The way the author makes you relate to the character, makes you feel as if you are standing there next to the character watching them and I've sat down before I looked at a book and picked it up just where I left it the night before and the character has died and I have almost felt as if I'm there next to them watching them.*

4.10.12 Thinking about it

Both teachers and students saw books as having potential for learning and transforming through lasting ideas realised in them. One child expressed this as:

> *The ability of a book to sort of have an impact on you communicate an idea to you that would last and maybe affect your personality or things that you do in some way which make it much better book than things like a happy ending.*

Another student said:

> *I think you can apply the book to your own life and maybe it's changed you.*

Both these students were in Yr11 and they would seem to be voluntarily articulating what teachers hope for. A teacher said the same thing, expressing the impact in terms of moral questions or decisions to make which have no easy answers and which leave you thinking. If a book presents a problem from two perspectives students have a chance to work out a solution using the two viewpoints; this is valuable learning.

One student said that they enjoyed pondering alternative endings once they had finished a book or even trying to work out what would happen next. This same student also referred to thinking emotionally about problems arising from a book: this represents another kind of learning. This view was reiterated by several other students. As well as thinking about the end some students engaged intellectually and emotionally throughout the book, pausing at the end of chapters to assess outcomes. There was an enjoyment in having guessed correctly*: like Sherlock Holmes*. One student explained this as:

> *…makes you think logically and it also like gives an, it can give an underlying story which means that you can use it in real life to like help you with skills you not have had before.*

A teacher looked to the way books could lead to wider discussions and valued complex discussions which might arise:

> *A novel which will deal with something that's difficult to define in life and challenge you to think about it, is brilliant.*

For another teacher, a book that left students thinking about wider issues than themselves *had done the job*.

A stronger and more far-reaching moral imperative emerged for one teacher talking about the impact of one class text:

> *I don't want to frighten them but I want them to be aware they're the next generation and they've got their fingers on the pulse.*

A strong theme was also seen as a way to provoke thought beyond the pages of the book.

Books were seen as providing strong curricular opportunities too, in terms of encouraging students to think and synthesise information:

> *…makes them question things and makes them question their own judgement and I think that, I'd really want more of that in the curriculum.*

4.10.13 Activities

There was a strong link between the text chosen for use in class and the possibility of engaging teaching activities which might arise from it. Often teachers had favoured teaching strategies which they knew would engage the students. These might include discussion work, role play or writing arising from the text. Whilst they referred to reading the text with the class, they generally did not see reading as a passive individual activity. However several teachers provided opportunities to read individually at the start of lessons and one teacher referred to occasionally suspending what he saw as teaching to allow students to read individually.

Activities would occur both at the end of the reading but also throughout the reading. For some it was important to use an activity such as writing to engage the students from the outset. This might be simple prediction exercises but also included early on getting students to tell the story from another character's perspective; perhaps even inventing a new character for this purpose.

One teacher found that she could sustain interest in reading the book by planning structured and exciting activities linked to the book. This was a common theme. Another mentioned turning prediction into a Crimewatch exercise, which engaged the students. Yet another thought that if class reading could be scaffolded with exciting activities related to the text which grabbed attention, then the students would *get a lot more out* of the text.

Discussions were mentioned by several teachers as a means of engaging interest but also of exploring cultural, social or historical ideas such as gender, racism or war. *Of Mice and Men* provided a range of discussion opportunities including racism, role of women and friendship.

One teacher linked class fiction to the locality and took the class out to explore the Cornish countryside described in the text.

In connection with developing linguistic understanding, one teacher developed a simile wall: each time an *Of Mice of Men* simile was found in the class text it would be recorded on a wall in the classroom. Another used the text to unpick language to show how it gave different perspectives.

4.10.13.1 Writing

Reading could lead to writing, explicitly or implicitly. One teacher spoke of how a creative writing test, perhaps an oxymoron in its own right, led to many vampire stories, versions of the *Twilight* series. She saw the reading as being a catalyst for their writing: *it fuelled their imagination*. One teacher used text to inspire students who attended a creative writing club. She referred specifically to complex structural features such as flashback or multiple narrative perspectives but also imagery, description of characters and individual word choice. Evidently texts were a rich seam of linguistic possibility for her.

Another teacher, himself interested in creative writing, explained how he might start with getting students to present a story from another point of view. However he went on to explain the symbiotic relationship he saw between reading text and success in English:

> *If I can get children interested in writing poems, in writing diaries, in trying to write books, in trying to write for journalism, the English skills develop from your love of words, from your love of language.*
>
> *….. I think about teaching a book is that it has a scope for a child to do something different with it and not just to take it as this is a story, which is all fine, but to say but what would you do, if you were telling the story how*

> *would you have started it and to give an individual that chance to express themselves.*

In this case the text was more a route to writing. In another school a teacher referred to books as having a depth of writing that students could apply to their own writing as well. This teacher thought that if students were given access to reading good prose in a book this could help these same students to improve their own writing at all levels. These levels moved from individual word choice; to the greater subtlety of being implicit, leaving the reader to infer from hints; to using books as a springboard to more effective student writing and seemed a common theme.

One teacher, however, objected to the need to fill time with activities based on the book. He simply wanted the object of the text to be the act of reading it:

> *It's a brilliant book but you've got to work on it, why not just read it?*

One student was inspired by the Alex Ryder series to want to make an animated film. Another spoke with enthusiasm about how she was writing her own novels based on genres she had read. Both teachers and students saw fiction as a springboard to other activities.

4.10.14 Summary of Object

This section indicates the range of purposes for the work of fiction for both class use and private reading. What is also evident is the general lack of pedagogic clarity behind the object. It is clear that the use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds is heavily influenced by factors beyond the intrinsic merit of the text be itself. Considering the object in terms of the CHAT theoretical framework emphasises the impact of community, rules, and responsibility on text choices and perceptions of the object to be achieved through engaging students in school with fiction. These same influences impact on the choice of fiction as an educational tool, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

4.11 Tools

When talking to both pupils and teachers I realised that the fiction texts chosen for both class use and for private reading were more often than not tools with a definite educational purpose. This purpose is clearly linked to the object described in the previous section but heavily influenced by the perceived requirements of community, rules and responsibility. This is true of class fiction texts and of texts recommended for private reading.

Teachers wish to engage students with the text but it is unusual for any text to be chosen for purposes of pleasure alone. This is also true of recommendations for private reading. Students' own choice of text more often has pleasure as a primary purpose but they are aware that there will be a learning aspect to class texts as well as possible enjoyment. The purposes for which fiction can be used are manifold; this is explored in Object. The choice of text is limited by the requirements of the community, by community rules and through the requirements of professional and personal responsibility.

4.11.1 Choices of books

4.11.1.1 Class texts

It is important to find the right text that will engage students' attention; this is often different from what is needed for private reading. Several teachers note the antipathy displayed by students to the whole notion of reading a class text:

> *You say we are reading a class novel they'll go: (groans)*
> *"Oh we've got to read a book!" and they are all annoyed.*

Class texts also presented a problem of continuity, unlike private reading. If lessons were far apart, students could lose a sense of what was happening and subsequently lose interest. For one teacher it was important that the students were gripped by the story, wanting to know what happened next. Another wanted them to be carried on by the narrative:

> *One of the main aims as well is to make sure the story is strong enough for them.*

When students enjoyed the text, this made it worthwhile:

You have students don't you that say: oh God we are coming to the end of the page and I don't want…coming to the end of the book and I don't want it to end and is there another book.

There can also be problems in delivering the text. Teachers know that students can be very reluctant to read out loud and this can in itself act as a barrier to engagement with the text. The students interviewed, from a cross-section of abilities, appeared less concerned about reading aloud. However more able students did note that reading the text together in class could be slow and irritating; many of these students read ahead or mentioned peers who did this. The students generally found pace of reading a class text important and were especially irritated if one of the class did read ahead in the story. One teacher referred to *Of Mice and Men* as a good class and examination text because the students understood it: this encompassed plot, characters and language. Understanding a class text was good for this group; it made them feel *clever*. Students were also resigned to not enjoying all class texts chosen for them to read.

Some teachers felt challenged by choosing a book to read with a class that had appeal for both genders. There was also some challenge in choosing a text that could be studied for a whole term without losing its appeal. Some teachers had to like the text themselves in order to teach it. However a HoD eschewed this and thought it was more productive for a teacher to choose a text which allowed a certain aspect of learning rather than worrying about liking it themselves:

It's all to do with choosing your book for a particular purpose actually.

…but of course when I am teaching a text there are other things I want to get out of it.

One teacher made a choice to teach *Mortal Engines* in order to provide girls in the class, who had low aspirations, with positive role models. Another was emphatic that the real purpose for reading a text in class was to extend literacy skills:

You are actually building their reading skills and you're building skills they can transfer into other contexts.

This teacher went on to explain that teachers had a responsibility to develop pupils' skills in reading rather than just *giving them a book to swallow*. Another teacher thought that the purpose of class texts at KS3 was simply to get them reading:

> *If we are going to get kids reading, which is the ultimate goal at KS3, we need to give them books which will lead on to other books in class and private reading.*

Yet another teacher drew a distinction between choosing books for study and books for pleasure. The use of the word study in relation to class texts indicates how the teacher views the texts themselves: primarily vehicles for the conduit of knowledge. Another teacher saw the choice of a class text as a way of exposing students to new knowledge which might give their students skills to operate more successfully in the adult world:

> *people find it interesting to learn about new topics and it also gives them a capacity in conversation which a lot of young people lack and that's why they struggle when it comes to part taking in that transition into becoming an adult because they haven't got that wide a knowledge of the world.*

4.11.1.2 Easy to understand

A common thread was that novels for this age group needed to be easy to understand at a linguistic level. This contrasted with the problems expressed about novels from an earlier time where language might prove a barrier to the actual act of reading. However there was concern for teachers to also get the textual challenge right for the ability of a group. Here *Stone Cold* was cited as perhaps too easy textually for higher groups in Yr9, despite the challenging themes. One teacher also spoke more globally of lower sets needing a text that was *more black and white with things*. Class texts were also seen differently from private reading which are easy to read when you go on holiday and *do not need to think*.

There was some consensus that the chosen novel for class or private reading should in some way link to the individual student's current knowledge, experience or understanding. However this was qualified by one teacher that the novel also

needed to cast new light on what the student already knew:

> *Something you are very familiar with but they bring it out in a new kind of light, I think it needs to bring something new to the table.*

A student confirmed this view:

> *You have to be able to understand it but also there's got to be some bits you can't understand.*

Yet another student was very clear about the need for text to be easy to understand:

> *You will want to understand what you are reading or else it is a waste of time reading it.*

Whilst another student affirmed that a novel needed to be easy to understand but have some bits that were complicated to *make you wonder*. One student, with others in the group agreeing, also commented that more complicated language worked if the plot was strong and carried the reader along. Another student saw easy to read as not having *super complicated grammar* or words which *you have to find in the dictionary.* In some ways this latter point contrasts with the teachers' desire to extend vocabulary thorough reading and some students also enjoyed looking words up and were aware of extending their own vocabularies in this way. Students were also aware that the level of difficulty of a chosen class text would depend on the ability of the teaching group. They all appreciated text with words, simple or complicated, which allowed them to use their imaginations.

4.11.1.3 Gender choices

Teachers, of both genders, were very aware of the need to include some kind of gender balance in choice of texts for use in class. This included both explicitly choosing books with themes of gender specific interest or looking for a balance of male and female characters. For private reading there was an acceptance by teachers that there were particular themes that appealed to girls and to boys; this was true of male and female teachers. These might be to do with growing up or linked to personal stories, such as *Stolen*. Teachers found it more difficult to cater for what they perceived to be boys' tastes in their recommendations.

Some students seemed less concerned about this than teachers. Students had a clear view of what constituted boys' or girls' books citing, for example, books by the author Jacqueline Wilson or the Twilight series as typical of girl orientated fiction. Boys were seen to be more *sporty minded* or liking more action and violence. Genre choices often crossed over with gender choices. Teachers thought that girls preferred romance and boys liked sci-fi, fantasy and adventure. Both students and teachers appreciated humour in books and saw this as equally applicable to boys and girls.

4.11.1.4 Content

Some students described their preference for books that had *really described books* and *action.* Students had an eclectic range of subject matter that they enjoyed and in some respects tended to divide along gender lines. Appearing to confirm the teachers' views expressed in the Section on *Gender choices* (*4.11.1.3*), boys liked mystery, action and fighting; girls mentioned preferences for happy / sad endings and romance. Both also included a liking for description, imagination, something scary, ideas related to real life and originality.

Teachers wanted twists, teenage issues, a strong story line, plots linked to different, different periods of history. They cited survival and adventure stories as good for boys whilst acknowledging that girls liked family stories, vampire plots and were drawn to real life stories of extreme suffering.

Well drawn characters to whom young people could relate were important. As with cliff-hangers it was felt that the slow building up of a character was important so that students wanted to read on to discover what happened to them next. Strong characters were important.

Differing, unreliable or multi narrative perspectives were considered important by more than one teacher and often linked to challenge. A child narrator enabled students to see things from another perspective.

Students did not want too many characters and preferred that they included teenagers:

> *It is more focussed on like one or two characters.*
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> *The characters should be like basically how a teenager should be.*

One teacher spoke of the need for *multi-faceted* characters who develop and change, perhaps morally, in relation to circumstances in the book. Interestingly flawed characters who were neither good nor evil were seen as more realistic. Another liked characters such as Pip or Magwitch where there was a sense of moral ambiguity: *you never quite know*. Complex characters provided an opportunity for discussion and for students to consider choices, decisions made and consequences. In teenage fiction, with teenage protagonists, adult figures were sometimes seen as authority figures providing moral compass.

Whilst teenage protagonists were considered important, students on the whole liked to read about children older than themselves.

4.11.1.5 Plot

The plot was considered important and inevitably general aspects of plot overlapped with the specific details of content and gender. One student referred to the fact that a story should entertain. For one teacher this meant a fast pace and plenty to engage all members of a class; for another *substance*. A good plot was one that would leave the reader wondering what would happen next perhaps with some ambiguity of possible direction in the narrative. However a good plot did not need to be complex. Twists were often considered important and this linked to cliff-hangers.

Students clearly engaged with a strong narrative and were able to retell stories they had read in considerable detail. One student was very precise in what she expected:

> *Something that has kind of a live action in it, someone doing something not some conversation that keeps going on and on.*

Here action was key. Other students were keen to read about real life both modern and historical. They preferred the stories to centre on people of their age. They felt they could learn from reading about the experiences of others like them. They also liked the idea that some historical texts might teach them facts.

For others it was very important that they could relate to the actions and characters in the stories.

Books with historical themes also allowed students to learn context about the book. This links to notion of the cultural capital. However one student, who had studied *Private Peaceful*, was unaware of whether it was set in the First or Second World War and expressed their confusion.

4.11.1.6 Canon

The canon is discussed more fully in the findings on rules and object. However the concept of the canon acts as a tool for some teachers in that it provides a bank of texts considered suitable for school use. For some teachers the canon presented challenges of length or complexity. This meant, for example, that whilst a teacher would use a Dickens novel such as *Great Expectations* in class, they would not necessarily study the entire text; exposure to the text was deemed sufficient.

4.11.2 Private Reading

4.11.2.1 Book Lists

Some schools provided book lists to support students in choosing private reading books. However these lists were not always kept up to date. It was not always clear where the responsibility for updating the list lay. The list linked to the library. It was felt that the library did not always have sufficient range of up to date books for students to choose from.

In one school the HoD ensured that there was a box of books in every classroom in order to give students more access to a range of texts; sometimes certain texts were included to give challenge: *A Handmaid's Tale* for example. In other schools the teachers did this for themselves. Several schools had 10 or 15 minutes' private reading at the start of every lesson where students were expected and encouraged to bring in their own books to read. Not all students brought books and there were book boxes for students to select from. Some teachers were willing for students to read magazines in the private reading time, considering that the students would eventually move on to better texts if they were at least reading. Teachers were heartened when they noticed students lost in a book and some would occasionally prolong the private reading time to allow the students to enjoy this moment.

4.11.2.2 Teacher Knowledge

Teachers demonstrated varying degrees of interest and knowledge in teenage fiction. Some did their best to keep up to date with what was available through reading, discussing with other professionals such as the librarian or by keeping up with awards. Of the awards the Carnegie was cited most frequently, although it must be noted that this is an award where nominations and winners are decided by an adult, school librarian panel. One teacher expressed her reading of teenage fiction in terms of the Carnegie Award. Nevertheless the Carnegie Shadowing scheme, allowing students to respond to nominated texts online, through school, was a forum for sharing and discussing a range of texts with students too.

Another teacher relied on years' of experience. This teacher had a fund of texts to use and recommend, for both class and private reading, built up from both talking to students about their reading but also noting what gave *little breakthroughs*. Unusually one teacher read nothing but teenage fiction and one stated she enjoyed reading it: they were, however, atypical. One teacher read a lot but did not enjoy it.

Many teachers evinced little interest in the genre and many had read little since PGCE training.

Don't think I've consciously gone out to read a book aimed at the teenage markets since I was training.

One teacher admitted that she did not know enough and would find it hard to name authors beyond J. K. Rowling. However teachers were willing to recommend texts they did not themselves enjoy. There was acceptance of a great range of teenage fiction currently available; one teacher spoke of *richness of choice* and *good authors out there,* showing confidence. Some teachers liked the idea of a section in a bookshop labelled teenage fiction as they could feel confident recommending titles from this area; one teacher saw trawling through bookshelves as a pleasurable part of the job.

Yet another tried to disguise her own distaste for series such as *Goosebumps* and *Twilight*, which students enjoyed reading in private. At KS4 there was less emphasis on private reading because of exam pressure; one teacher no longer recommended books to this age group but did try to initiate discussions about what pupils had been reading. KS4 was also seen as a point where teachers might begin to recommend what they termed adult fiction for private reading.

Some teachers linked to their own experience of reading. One teacher thought she had a gift for encouragement and found it was an effective ploy to simply keep encouraging very regularly without being dictatorial about what the students read. Another teacher found peer recommendation a valuable tool for disseminating information about texts. Teachers often described recommendations for private reading in gender terms: *girls like this / boys like that*.

One problem of teachers having limited knowledge of books might be that they were unable to help students progress appropriately in their reading and might push them *into reading difficult books.* One HoD did question whether a teacher without a suitable repertoire of teenage books might actually be less effective. A knowledgeable teacher was able to generate informal discussion about books with groups of students and motivate in that way.

There was a recurrent theme of teachers needing to be familiar with teenage fiction themselves in order to help students choose books and even progress in

their private reading. Some teachers made a real effort to read teenage fiction in the *vague hope* of keeping up with it. The library was sometimes a valuable resource but at other times seems as under resourced where little might appeal. One teacher was very reluctant to interfere in private reading but was willing to give recommendations to get a student started. Another tried not to be *dismissive* of the books students selected for their own reading:

> *I do care how well it's written but I'd rather they just want to read.*

4.11.3 Authors

There were 55 authors mentioned by name Of these only six represent authors from pre 1914; of these six one author is French and two are American. There is limited correlation between the authors mentioned by teachers and students during interviews and those recommended in the NC. Recent popular authors are mentioned most frequently with Jacqueline Wilson and Chris Higgins occurring most often. Dickens, Austen and Shakespeare are mentioned from pre-1914 texts. The recent authors are not mentioned in curriculum iterations. It was noticeable that teachers mentioned genres of books or what a text could contribute in the classroom more often than actual authors. The wordcloud below, generated from the data by an N-Vivo query, indicates the frequency of names mentioned by teachers and students in interviews:

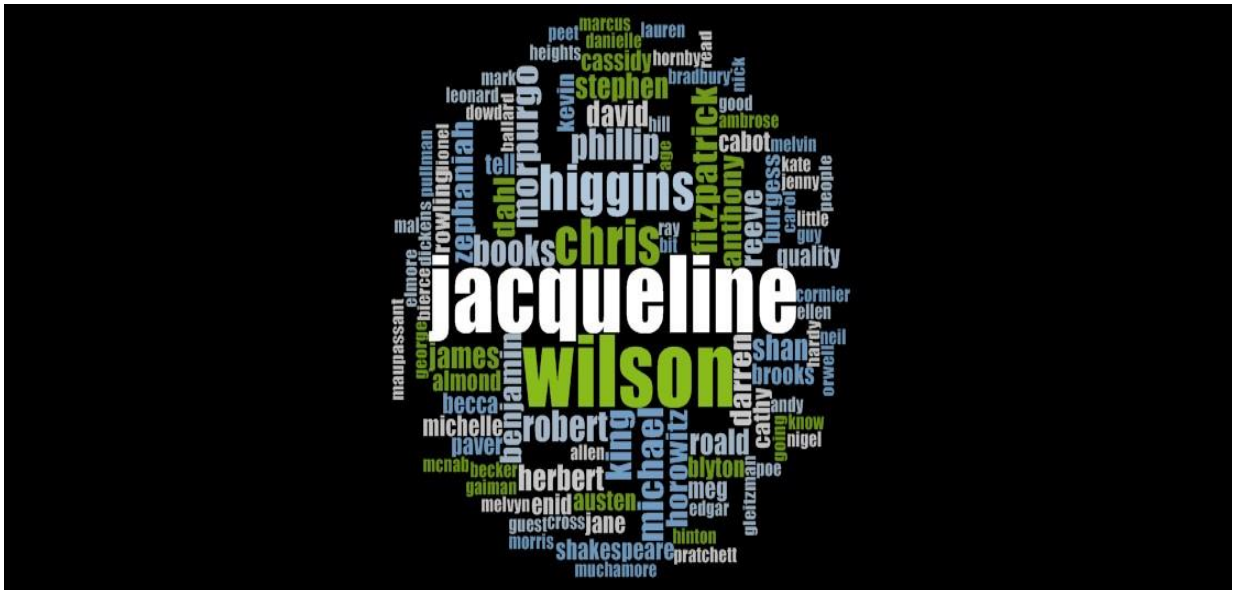

Table 4.8

4.11.4 Books

157 books or series of books were mentioned in interviews. Here all books, for example, of the Harry Potter or the Dark Materials series were recorded under one heading. As with authors, there are limited references to pre 1914 books or those which might be regarded to be part of the canon. The Harry Potter series, *Of Mice and Men* and *Private Peaceful* were mentioned most frequently.

4.12 Quality

4.12.1 Definitions of quality

There was little consensus about what books might be termed quality. One teacher defined quality deficit in terms of commercial appeal and lack of narrative which might encourage thought. This idea that quality would be represented by a book that made you think afterwards was recurrent from teachers and pupils.

Quality was very difficult to define. It could be a *hard* book. A pupil thought it was *something you could get your teeth into* and not just *skim* through. A group of able 16 year olds were keen to have aspects of a book that was less easy to understand with original, but not old-fashioned, language; they were keen readers and looking for challenge. On the other hand a teacher in the same school thought that quality could lie in a book that the students enjoyed reading; here it might be quite simple and straightforward. This same teacher did not necessarily see inclusion of a text in the canon as implying quality. This relates to earlier findings from the questionnaire.

Another teacher, in a different school, also forefronted enjoyment: *they wouldn't be forced to read it they want to read it…* This teacher acknowledged that the student's view of quality might be quite different from that of the parent or teacher. For one teacher quality lay in a book that they themselves could return to year after year, perhaps linking to stock cupboard and curriculum imperatives:

We are still very much dictated to by controlled assessment and time and someone else's view of quality.

A book of quality might be from the canon or the classics but there was a degree of ambivalence on precisely what the classics were. One teacher considered that in school the HoD should be the arbiter of quality; this is also related to community and responsibility.

There were also references to quality in a book lying in the quality of the response the students gave to it and the thinking that the book might prompt. They also wanted a book of quality to give rise to activities in class and to offer definite opportunities for learning, or the development of skills such as the pupils' own writing. However teachers did not see it as important for a book of quality to be centred on particular issues; however they valued books which made students consider a different way of life, more broadly.

More specifically one teacher related quality to a book where students could immerse themselves *in the book through relationships with the characters* or in the language choices. Quality was also seen as a strong narrative, which did not need to be complex, or in a book which might enlighten pupils about historical and cultural matters. *Intricacies* in plot were valued as was something that gave a fresh insight on, or approach to, a familiar topic, such as *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas* on the Holocaust theme. Teachers were even willing to consider books as quality if such texts ignited an interest in reading, such as the *Twilight* series. Another considered that a book *unique stylistically*, such as *Catcher in the Rye*, represented quality.

The structure of a book might also present quality if it offered a level of textural complexity or surprises: *dramatic events where it could go either way, maybe quite ambiguous,* or a slow build-up of tension, or narrative surprises.

Students were more eclectic in their definition of a quality text. It might be an old or a new plot, a series, interesting relationships and characters, themes they could relate to. It might even relate to cover or illustrations for some. They regarded as quality books where they could clearly visualise characters and

settings; some described being drawn into a good book, being there with the characters:

> *…really good for me has to been eye grabbing and yet brain…like my brain had got the pictures in my head.*

They liked books to be realistic. Some students echoed the teachers' words in valuing books that made them think in some way. They also appreciated the opportunity to extend their vocabulary. They liked to be carried on by emotion generated through plot and effective description. For many who contributed it was important to be drawn in from the very first word, page or chapter.

4.12.2 Quality Titles

Students tended to cite popular titles, often series, as quality titles; as noted above they were often interested the enjoyment that a text could give them. For example the Vampire series, Harry Potter, the Alex Rider books. They also liked *Private Peaceful* and *War Horse*; the former had been a class text. This enjoyment was often more important than any perceived learning experience. For students there was an acceptance that class texts were primarily tools, in the terms defined above (Section 4.11), for the teacher to use with them. However one group of high achieving pupils were clearly committed to developing the range and depth of their own personal reading and were scathing about popular novels deemed appropriate for their age group.

Two Holocaust based texts, *Once* and *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*, were mentioned by teachers as being of quality: here the subject and the way it was conveyed contributed to the quality. However both teachers and students found it difficult to name particular texts as representing quality.

4.12.3 Quality Writing

Views on what was quality writing in fiction for young adults were also eclectic; it was not necessarily rooted in curriculum or examination requirements and sometimes lacked precise definition. Teachers commented on quality as:

richness of the characterisation,

strangeness of fiction,

clever use of language,

inventive and creative and entertaining feel in his descriptive writing,

*an elegiac, couplet (*citing *Private Peaceful),*

an original voice

One teacher, conversely, thought that over simple sentence structure exemplified poor practice in writing, citing work by Zephaniah as an example of this.

Students said:

the pictures are in the words,

the description, the emotion it was all and definitely the plot line,

the pictures are actually in the words themselves,

I like passionate, powerful words.

Students appreciated writing that flowed.

However what was evident was both how difficult it was for both teachers and students to describe quality in writing with any precision and also how individual and personal each opinion was. Teachers were more likely to have some curriculum agenda but the students referred to individual, often emotional, responses to texts. There were no common criteria by which to identify quality.

4.12.4 Blurb, Cover and Opening

When choosing books for private reading, students valued the blurb on the book. They had very clear ideas on how it should engage them in the book: *short and snappy; it's got to drag you in, it's got to have interesting words*;… In choosing a book for private reading some students would read the first paragraph to get an idea, others read from further into the book. One student described picking a book because it has an aura – apparently emanating from cover, blurb and opening. As she described it the book began to live under her hand:

> *It's just like it has sort of aura around it and when you go to pick it up it just feels in your hand like you have got a good book and then when you open it up and you just read the first chapter.*

Students were well versed in the aphorism *don't judge a book by its cover* but even so covers did influence their personal reading choices and their reactions to books chosen as class texts. There was no real consensus about what made a good cover other than that it should attract attention and let you know something about the book. It was evident that the cover could also indicate genre such as fantasy or vampire books. Students liked this; they also liked colour to attract attention.

Both teachers and students commented on the importance of a strong opening, probably opening chapter, to hook the reader in. The hooks described might be plot based or linguistic; a dramatic happening or a hint of something to come. What all agreed on was the need to create a sense of interest for the reader from the outset. For students, more than teacher, that excitement needed to come from the first sentence.

4.13 General Summary

My research question and sub-questions, stated at the start of this chapter were:

What does *quality* mean when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?

The sub-questions addressed in the findings were:

1. What does *quality* mean to teachers when used with reference to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds?

2. What does *quality* mean to secondary school students (11 – 16 years old) in their reading choices?

3. What are the differences and similarities between teachers' and students' perspectives on quality?

This final sub-question is addressed in Chapter 5, The Discussion.

4. What might be the implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching literature of *quality*?

In this chapter I have illuminated the perceptions of the teachers and the students with regard to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for use in class and for reading for pleasure. Using the framework of CHAT as an analytical tool has revealed the complex influences on perceptions of what is fiction of quality for 11 – 16 year olds. It has revealed that the teachers' perceptions are heavily influenced by external rules and feelings of responsibility to circles of the community within and beyond the actual school. It has also shown that interpretations of what the object of the work of fiction is and how the artefact is chosen may be influenced or, indeed, dependent on idiosyncratic community perceptions at individual institution or department level. There is little mention of pedagogy. The theoretical implications of this is are explored in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 in the next chapter.

Whilst they are at the centre of the picture, the data have also revealed that students are relatively powerless in affecting choices of fiction for use in school. They are clear about what they like to read and they like to share books for private reading with their peers. However they are very rarely consulted about choices of fiction and community rules can mean that they are not encouraged to read what they enjoy reading.

Analysis of the data using the CHAT categories has also revealed confusion about the object of the use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds and also about the purpose of fiction as a mediating educational tool. This appears to be linked to the lack of clear, consistent and principled pedagogy supporting the use and teaching of fiction in the classroom and for reading for pleasure. It is this latter point, my sub research question 4, that I will address fully in the next chapter, The Discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This small-scale empirical study was designed to investigate perceptions of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds through the voices of teachers and students. In doing this, the study sought to consider how perceptions of quality applied to books to be read for pleasure and books to be read in school because of perceived qualities of literary merit and purpose, the *Maltesers and Carrots* of the title of this thesis. Q*uality* is a description of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds in common currency in professional documentation relating to the teaching of English in England (NC, 2008) and the term also has a tacitly accepted definition amongst the community with an interest in what 11 – 16 year olds read: teachers, parents, school, educators, policy makers. Nevertheless the data from this study indicate the huge diversity of views relating to what quality in such fiction is. In addition the data point to the many social, cultural and historical influences which affect those views as well. This indication of a lack of common understanding of the notion of *quality* is important when a perceived universal meaning of this one particular word underpins key official documentation in England and in other countries with an anglophone curriculum too. This documentation in England has a lack of explicit rationale behind curriculum statements of worth and value. In this documentation the place of literature in the curriculum is taken to be of value and yet the value of literature in the curriculum has not been properly debated. This point has also been made by Cliff Hodges (2010a) and Goodwyn (2012a).

The teaching and wider community uses the term *quality* believing that there is a common understanding and firm basis in what constitutes quality fiction for 11 - 16 year olds. The adult community, often comprising parents and others with a vested interest in their children's education, may also presume a common outcome from the reading of such *quality fiction.* This presumption, much as the nineteenth century debate reviewed in Chapter 2, arising from *quality* is most frequently linked to moral, social or educational improvement. There is considerable semantic and cultural weight in the use of the word *quality* in the

context of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds and, thus, this lack of a considered, explicit definition of *quality* in the context of this fiction may be seen as problematic.

Whilst there have been many honourable attempts to illuminate what 11 – 16 year olds read and indeed how teachers view this reading as I discussed in Chapter 2, The Review of the Literature, there has been no sustained attempt to draw together the threads of what young people read at home and in the classroom. This includes how texts are selected and the purposes for which these texts are used, again both at home and in the classroom. In the previous chapter I explored, through the data, the range of opinions on appropriate fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age range to read through the lens of the opinions of both the students and the teachers. I also demonstrated the range and extent of the influences impinging on the choices and recommendations of such texts seen as having *quality*. Additionally the data revealed a professional tension for teachers in reconciling their own personal views on fiction for young people and on the reading of fiction in general, with a need to respond to conflicting expectations and requirements from the various communities arising from the use of fiction with pupils. Meeting these conflicting expectations and requirements meant the teachers moving beyond viewing choices of fiction for 11 - 16 year olds simplistically as *Maltesers or Carrots* but rather looking to choose texts to use or recommend texts which would enable both the teachers and the students to meet externally set targets. In this chapter I will explore the theoretical and pedagogical implications of these findings.

This study has confirmed previous research in several areas. The data have demonstrated again the diversity of what children like to read (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 1995a; Hall and Coles, 1999; et al) and, indeed, reinforced the changing nature of this preference with much new and current fiction favoured by the cohort of 11 – 16 year olds in this research. This fiction favoured by the students is, in itself, once again different in terms of authors and titles cited from previous surveys. This study has built significantly on previous research into the use of fiction in school and notions of a school canon and is contiguous with national and international research concurrent with this study (Benton, 2000; Gibbons, 2009; Beach et al, 2010; McLean Davies et al, 2013). It

has also made a notable new contribution to research by revealing what may be termed teachers' professional confusion about how to use fiction with students from 11 – 16 when there are significant tensions between curriculum and examination demands and a more philosophical desire to encourage 11 – 16 year olds' pleasure and enjoyment in the act of reading fiction. This builds on and develops themes from recent research by McLean Davies et al, (2013); Richards-Kamal, (2008) and Westbrook (2013); it also places the research reported in this thesis within an international forum of concern and debate about literature and the curriculum. In this context this study also confirms a continuing prevalent model for the teaching of literature based on a literary heritage model (Goodwyn, 1992; Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999; Goodwyn, 2012a) which is closely linked to fulfilling curriculum and examination criteria rather than developing individual literary taste and critical discernment.

5.1.1 Research Questions

At the heart of this chapter are the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. Whilst the findings chapter, Chapter 4 addressed the first three sub questions, the fourth question, relating to the implications will be addressed through the Discussion:

- What might be the *theoretical* implications for understanding the pedagogy of choosing, recommending and teaching good fiction for 11 - 16 year olds?

In the following sections I will explore the theoretical and pedagogical significance of the data. The CHAT categories used for the analysis will provide a frame of reference to inform and illuminate this discussion. I will draw the threads of this same discussion together to indicate the theoretical implications of this research. I will do this by considering how the term *quality* has been and continues to be constructed and conceptualised in relation to works of fiction read and recommended in schools. I will then look at how this word *quality* has effectively become *schooled* (Street, 1993; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009), that is acquired a particular semantic and cultural significance within the educational community. This will lead to demonstrating how this interpretation of *quality* contributes to

professional tensions in the teaching and presenting of fiction to 11 – 16 year olds. Finally I will explore the consequences of this *schooling* of quality in relation to the use of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds on teachers and students of English in the school system for curriculum purposes and for private reading.

5.2 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Exploring the data through the lens of CHAT has been illuminating and significant in developing new theory. The data have confirmed that not only is any interpretation of quality, related to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds, inherently subjective, but the data have also revealed that perceptions of quality are considerably influenced by forces beyond the work of fiction itself. Here the following aspects of the Activity Theory triangle, rules, community and responsibility (the last my interpretations of division of labour), are of key significance since aspects of each of these elements often act as qualifiers to, or influences on, how a teacher or a student may express views of quality.

It is also evident, again emerging from the use of CHAT as a framework for analysis, that there is lack of consistency about what the object of the activity of reading a work of fiction is, interpreted in a school context. In terms of the Activity Triangle the object of any activity is to realise an outcome. Where the work of fiction is the tool, the object can serve several functions, sometimes simultaneously, in an effort to satisfy the rules of the various communities linked to the activity. The object (purpose or outcome) can encompass pleasure, enjoyment, or a means of achieving educational development through examination success or through an engagement with features of the text which will lead to other learning such as understanding about grammar or literary features. Sometimes the object will combine elements of pleasure with those of focused instruction. However there can be a conflict as teachers strive to achieve several goals and meet the demands of several of the significant communities; this again resonates with and adds to a body of recently reported national and international research (McLean Davies et al, 2013; Goodwyn, 2012a; Westbrook, 2013). This present study illustrates that the intrinsic nature of the work of fiction

as a work of literature can become subsumed as curriculum driven targets are addressed.

5.2.1 Community

The circles of community described in the data illustrate a further complexity. There are alternative views of community which fit tangentially with the data from this research. For example, Lave and Wenger (1991) describe Communities of Practice which exist both within individual schools and, in a broader context, across the community of teachers and extend as far as policy makers and enforcers and parents. These are the concurrent or overlapping circles of community which I illustrated in Table 4.7 and which I have mentioned in the preceding paragraph. It was evident from both questionnaires and interviews reported in the findings (Chapter 4) that there were some shared opinions within departments and also across schools, about what constituted quality in fiction texts for 11 – 16 year olds to read both in school and at home. There was, however, a limited sense of members of the school community learning from each other by observation and practice as Lave and Wenger describe. Rather, the data here indicate that the individual teacher seemed to accept a lack of autonomy in either choice of tool for the activity related to the work of fiction or to the object of that related activity. Instead teachers deferred to members of the communities seen to have power: Heads of Department, Parents, and Examination Boards, for example.

In terms of this study the circles of community appear to sit on top of each other hierarchically rather than interacting equally. Looking at the various communities (for example the teachers, the pupils, the parents, the whole school community, policy makers) described in this study through CHAT also reveals the embedded social, cultural and historical influences that affect their thinking and actions. Writing recently from an Australian perspective McLean Davies et al (2013) report a similar phenomenon. They note that the enaction of a literature curriculum involves not just negotiation of the physical institutional settings but also the mediation *of larger social and political contexts beyond what is immediately visible (p.227)*.

5.2.2 Tool

How the tool, the work of fiction as an artefact for mediation, is viewed is largely in relation to the object required by any sector of the community; as the data illustrate, this is complex. As I have already, noted the data indicate that the work of fiction used as a tool in the classroom will not necessarily always depend on its complete narrative function and that elements of the text may be used as tools to fulfil learning targets, perhaps only loosely connected to the whole text. Using CHAT as an analytical framework enables this complexity to be explored and revealed.

The analysis of the data reveal that in this study there is a movement from seeing the cultural artefact, a work of fiction, as a complete literary work to some fragmentation of the whole. The teacher who spoke of not studying *Great Expectations* in its entirety in this research was not alone. This text seems to suffer particularly and globally since it is also mentioned in an Australian context McLean Davies et al, (2013) and in an English context beyond the South West of England (Goodwyn, 2012a); this confirms a pervasive problem. It appears that the cultural value of the work of fiction is often less important than the learning outcomes it can support or the facility with which it can be taught. Teachers in this study spoke of the value of available resources to accompany the text; the same phenomenon was noted by Beach et al (2010). Whilst the tool, in terms of CHAT is indeed often a cultural artefact, evidence reported in in this study is that the work of fiction can sometimes be conceptualised as a means to an end somewhat divorced from its existence as a work of literature.

5.2.3 Boundary Objects in this study

Analysing the data in terms of the CHAT framework led to the development of significant new theoretical insights; a moment of revelation in this research. As I noted in the previous chapter, it began to appear that attitudes towards fiction for 11 – 16 year olds were deeply entrenched in a complex set of perceptions linked to community, rules and responsibility and that these perceptions were often shared by members of an institution but might differ from institution to institution.

It also became evident that, whilst the CHAT theoretical framework had revealed this complexity, it did not allow for deeper theoretical exploration to explain the phenomenon. It became necessary to look for other theoretical perspectives to explain this significant aspect of the data. It was at this point, looking again at the literature, that I discovered theories of boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Wenger, 1998; Engeström and Sannino, 2010; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009) and realised that this branch of Activity Theory might explain the phenomenon I had noted in the data; it was a significant moment in the interpretation of this study. Further reading of the literature also seemed to indicate that, alongside theories of boundary objects, there were also links to theories of *schooled attitudes* (Street, 1993).

Theories of boundary objects and of schooled attitudes helped me to contextualise and expand the significance of the data with greater precision. In the next two sections I explore further implications of the data when examined in the light of boundary objects and schooled attitudes. I also show how these new theoretical interpretations gives rise to new and relevant pedagogy relating to the teaching and dissemination of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds in a school and curriculum context.

5.2.3.1 Theories of Boundary Objects

When conceptualising the work of fiction as a tool, what can also be seen from the data is that there is often no common understanding of the object of reading across the communities any more than there is a common understanding of a definition of quality. Developments in the conceptualisation of aspects of Activity Theory, those related to boundary objects, (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Wenger, 1998; Engeström and Sannino, 2010; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009) are significant in explaining this. Taking the scientific world as a starting point, Star and Griesemer consider the problem of *Common Representation in Diverse Intersecting Social Worlds* (p.388) where the development of new scientific knowledge is dependent on communication. Looking at the problem of attributing common meaning to ideas across institutions, practices and indeed individuals they theorise the problem areas as boundary objects, explaining these as:

> *Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual-site use*. (p.393)

For the purposes of this study the subsequent comment:

> *The creation and management of boundary objects is a key process to developing and maintaining coherence* across *intersecting social worlds. (ibid)*

encapsulates the problems of semantic coherence in the understandings and definitions of *quality* identified in this study. Whilst Wenger (1998) sees the boundary objects as potentially allowing cohesion of purpose across social groups, he also notes that these same boundary objects enable *coordination* (p.106) between societies but may do so without creating the vital *bridge between the perspectives and meanings of the various constituencies*. It is the lack of the bridge between definitions of quality and also the use and purposes of fiction for the 11 – 16 year olds that is important as a conceptual tool in this study.

Building on the initial theoretical explorations of the significance of *boundary objects* in explaining how communities understand and misunderstand each other, Goredetsky and Barak (2009) consider *boundary objects* in a pedagogical context. They explored the problem created by the *weakness of the structure of boundary objects* within a school context. They discovered that while the lack of defined structure of boundary objects facilitated communication, however it also impeded the *construction of new knowledge*. Furthermore, they noted that in a school context, already heavily influenced by cultural, social and historical precedent, the boundary objects used to facilitate communication might even:

> *serve as camouflage, leading to conservation of past pedagogies (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Cobb et al., 2003) by giving the community the false impression that its members share the 'same' understandings.* (p.598)

This resonates with this study and links back to the conceptualisation of the text as tool. Reference to *boundary objects* within the context of the CHAT framework allows further theoretical illumination of the data. It is also at this point that the significance of the differing aspects of the communities is important: each

community may further contribute to the fuzziness in the interpretation of a particular common boundary object.

5.2.4 Schooled attitudes

The use of CHAT, and particularly the connection to boundary objects, clearly illustrates the way in which the community view has become *schooled.* That is encultured into a view specific to the cultural and societal context in which it operates and is influenced by historical attitudes and assumptions already extant and often of long precedence within the institution or even individual view. This is a specific illustration of the processes described by Goredetsky and Barak (2009) and linked to the impact of boundary objects on localised practice in allowing a tacit acceptance of new interpretations of external ideas by the specific community. These ideas are neither rooted in theory nor in pedagogy; this is true of some current practices in the use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds.

This phenomenon, becoming *schooled*, has pedagogical parallels with Street's (1993) observation about the fact that *Literacy* (Street's capital, p.82) is not an *autonomous model*. His premise of multifaceted interpretations of *literacy dependent* on historical, social and cultural contexts resonates with the cultural, historical and social views of *quality* represented in this research. He theorises that interpretations of *literacy* are not static but fluid and changing. He is also mindful that new theories, here he cites Heath's *literacy event* (p.82), take on different forms or meanings in line with the other communities and rules within which they operate. This is equally true of the use of the word *quality* and perhaps particularly significant. For Street a new theory such as *a literacy event* came with a clear definition and underpinning theory at its inception; even then it was open to change and evolution in different contexts. McLean Davies et al (2013), in line with my findings, have also concurrently noted the complexity of the interpretations of text within a community setting: *the meaning of the literary work as an unstable product in which it is read and appropriated* (p.230).

Quality is equally open to interpretation in the light of the needs and priorities of a community; this is a given when talking about boundary objects too. However with *quality* there has never been a theoretical starting point or an accepted pedagogical definition accompanied by agreed pedagogical criteria. This has led to the development of extremely flexible interpretations of quality, which are then linked much more closely to particular community contexts and perspectives; to cultural, historical and social imperatives. This again is related to theories of boundary objects. Street's observations interpreted in the light of Wenger (1998), Gorodetsky and Barak (2009) and Engeström and Sannino (2010) can lead us to a view of a theory being *schooled.* By this we understand that a general concept can acquire a new meaning within the school context and, further, within the context of a particular school. This can be seen to have happened with concepts of *quality* in the different elements of the community.

This becomes more problematic with the conceptualisation of *quality* by the differing communities. This is because the circles that represent aspects of the school and educational community do not even have an original theoretical perspective of *quality* to reference. Thus the meaning of *quality* can be seen to link closely to the social and cultural perspectives of the particular community. This is frequently influenced by perceived historical precedent which may be an institutional or individual precedent, just as theories of boundary objects indicate.

In addition the historical precedent in relation to the meaning of *quality* is almost inevitably influenced by semantic significance and not linked to pedagogical theory. This historical precedent of meaning is also, at both institutional and individual level, rooted in strong personal and subjective views which are dependent on a personal belief system rather than theory grounded in objective and principled research. The nineteenth century debates on quality explored in the Review of Literature (Chapter 2) are a case in point.

Those historical assumptions, arising from strongly held personal beliefs, can be seen to impact on early education policy makers and theorists too (Newbolt, 1921). Indeed recent proposed changes to the GCSE syllabus for English Literature illustrate how this perpetuates in the twenty first century. Tickle (2013)

records discord between the Community of Examiners and policy makers at the DfE in the inclusion of complex nineteenth century poets in the new GCSE syllabus. Here we see the individual view of *quality* exemplified by the current Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, who has a cultural and historical view of quality literature based on his own prior experience. This is in direct contrast to the views of the communities of teachers and examiners, whose views of appropriate texts are linked to pedagogical experience and understanding. The lack of a theoretical clarity to the notion of quality is thus seen to be problematised by the differing objects valued by the different communities. Similarly views of quality in the fiction used with 11 – 16 year olds, in the classroom or for private reading for pleasure, will depend on the object desired by the particular aspect of the community.

Considering interpretations of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds through CHAT and in the light of theories relating to boundary objects reveals the lack of any rooted theoretical or pedagogical basis for interpretations of quality. It also demonstrates that there can be no common understanding when interpretations of quality are not only community dependent at all levels but equally subject to the dangers inherent in communities believing that they share a common understanding, when this is demonstrably far from the case. As Star & Griesemer (1989); and Cobb et al. (2003) note, and has been demonstrated through the data, this leads not to progress but rather the *conservation of past pedagogies*. This also resonates with Bodman, Taylor, Morris (2012, p. 15), citing Newman and Clarke (2009), who describe teachers as being *conceived as 'corporate agents, grasping and executing the organisation's mission'.*

In the next section I will move from CHAT to look in more detail at how the data indicate notions of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds have been constructed and the implications of this for a new pedagogy.

5.3 The construction of *quality* in relation to works of fiction read and recommended in schools

In the previous section I demonstrated that there is a lack of theoretical or pedagogical underpinning for quality as a descriptor of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds and that interpretations of quality are community dependent. I have indicated that this lack of theoretical substance becomes further problematic at the intersection of community boundaries leading to both *fuzziness* of interpretation and, more worryingly, the conservation of past pedagogies. In this section I will consider how quality in relation to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds can be conceptualised in the light of the data presented here.

I return again to what has been at the heart of this small scale study: that, despite the prevalence of *quality* as a defining term of fiction, in professional dialogue and curriculum documentation alike, there is no common definition of it. Neither the students nor the teachers have a common view of what represents quality fiction. This is problematic when the term has common professional currency and there is an assumed understanding of what it means. Yet there is no definition to support its usage in official documentation and teachers' understanding of what *quality* means vary greatly too; this links to theories of boundary objects too as I have illustrated in the previous section. This study has demonstrated, again substantiating and building on the TLRI report (2009), that each teacher operates within their own *discursive frame*. Furthermore there is no commonality of interpretation across communities of teachers (school, and department) because of the assumed understanding and, possibly, the lack of opportunity on a regular professional basis to discuss choices of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds in terms of how it should be approached as a tool and what the common objects behind its use are understood to be.

On the whole teachers looked at definitions of quality during interviews through a professional lens, although these views did not necessarily represent what they themselves were looking for in fiction at a personal level for their own reading.

The problem identified in these findings is that choices of fiction text were frequently influenced by assessment or curriculum imperatives, rather than community pedagogic discussion and initiative. This resonates with research findings also reported by Domaille (2003), Gibbons (2009) and Goodwyn (2008). This, in turn, links closely to the pedagogical problem of boundary objects noted by Gorodetsky and Barak (2009) indicated in the previous section and the research that they reported on issues surrounding movement towards some cohesion of objects.

There was more consistency in how 11 – 16 year olds interpreted *quality* across age groups, both within and across school communities; they did not differentiate between books for learning and books for pleasure. For them engagement and pleasure were more important:

> *..probably be one that grabs your attention from the first like word*
>
> *..I think the impact;*
>
> *..you need to sort of keep thinking about it.*

For the students definitions were more straightforward and linked more closely than those of the teachers to personal preference and enjoyment. Literary terms such as plot and character supported the students' explanations, indicating that they understood and had learned and could use terminology about the key structures of a novel. The data were in line with earlier research showing that the students enjoyed new publications and that they appreciated a strong storyline. The students understood that some curriculum learning could and often would be an object of the reading of fiction but nevertheless engagement with story and enjoyment of the process of reading a book was still their first priority. This is supported by Goodwyn's (2012a) plea that curriculum teaching of literature should seek to engage students and should have *some personal significance* (p.213) to them. Although individuals liked different aspects of fiction nevertheless, for the students, subjective engagement was a key indicator of quality. It is notable that Sarland (1994) recorded that children were as able to comment incisively on books considered to be lightweight (the *Maltesers* of my study, the Point Horror series for Sarland) as they were on books deemed to be of a more worthy quality (the *Carrots* of my study).

There is a notable dissonance between how 11 – 16 year olds perceive quality and how the adults perceive quality. This can be conceptualised in terms of boundary objects and is related to perceptions of the object of reading. The pressures from different aspects of community mean that where students prioritised enjoyment in a text, teachers were often target driven. All of these elements impact on how the tool, the work of fiction, is actually perceived and used both in the classroom context and also as a means of encouraging enjoyment in private reading. This finding also develops research by Domaille (2003); Richards-Kamal (2008); Beach et al (2010). Whilst the Activity Triangle elements, community, rules and responsibility, are discrete, they are also mutually significant and more than influential on the choice of texts (tools) and on the purposes and outcomes of the teaching (object). As I have noted before the community, rules and responsibility aspects of the Activity Triangle both underpin the other functions and also each of these points impact on each other. Crucially this also affects views of quality too.

Where young people are clear about what is quality for them in fiction for their age group, teachers are ambivalent. They cite criteria of quality which link to a literary heritage model of understanding literature (plot, language, theme, for example). One teacher noted:

> *there'll be some books in the canon that will be fantastic and those are the books to focus on*

but drew distinctions about the definition of quality in relation to their own private reading; the private reading of the students they teach; and more particularly quality in the texts they will choose to use in the classroom. In this latter category the definitions of quality relate to how the text can enable learning targets to be met.

> *…get the students interested in the book through different activities that you can do…*

> *…it's just so perfect to study in a school environment I think where children are moving on from Primary to Secondary education and all they are exposed to in the world.*

With no clear pedagogical theory to guide thinking it is evident that the term quality, related to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds, acquires different meanings in different situations. Teachers and pupils construct and conceptualise quality according to different criteria and in response to different requirements and there is no consistent interpretation within or across communities. In the next section I shall consider how the concept of quality, in fiction has been schooled.

5.4 How *quality* has effectively become schooled, that is acquired a particular semantic significance within the educational Community.

I have already considered how the conceptualisations of quality inherent in the various circles of community pertinent to this study (class teachers, pupils, departments, schools, parents, external agencies, examination boards, amongst others: see Table 4.2) impact on attitudes and approaches to the delivery of fiction to the 11 – 16 year old age group for both use in the classroom and also for private reading. This creates complexity, tension and even confusion. Indeed I find myself challenged now as to how to describe the process of introducing secondary age pupils to a range of fiction: is it introduction, delivery, dissemination, teaching? This builds on research noted in the Review of the Literature, Chapter 2 (Yandell, 2008; Goodwyn, 2012a). The ongoing tension in terms of the purpose of fiction in the classroom was fully exemplified and expanded through the data. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

5.4.1 To educate or entertain?

The data confirmed a tension explored in the Review of the Literature: that is whether teachers conceptualised the purpose of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds as primarily for pleasure or as a tool or means for education. This also reflects and resonates with debates from the eighteenth century between, for example, Trimmer and Coleridge (Bottoms, 2006) through to current concerns too (Sumara, 2008; Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999; Rosen, 2005). Guthrie (2002) brings the two sides of the argument together in noting that *engaged* readers are

those who *read for pleasure and enjoyment.* This is a welcome affirmation that *Maltesers* and carrots can co-exist within the literary curriculum. It is significant in considering the relevance of the data from this study that Guthrie and Westbrook both note that engaged readers, that is motivated and interested readers, also manage, comprehend and manipulate text more effectively than those who are not engaged.

Therefore, whilst research indicates that enjoyment in a text will also lead to success in other objects related to the text, this is not often a prime consideration in choosing a text within a school context. This also reflects earlier findings from Sarland (1994) and his observations that children were able to respond as incisively and critically to popular texts (*Maltesers*) as they were to texts deemed more educationally appropriate. This is not to say that teachers in any way discount the value of students enjoying a text simply that the *schooling* of the text has led to other priorities predominating in choices of text.

Nevertheless this study seems to indicate that to achieve a learning object, in CHAT terms, the precise choice of the fiction text, or tool, as a mediating artefact is important. It is evident that students enjoy getting *lost* in books they choose to read for pleasure. They spoke eloquently about how they escaped into their imagination through reading and how the effects of such reading engagement stayed with them. However they often claim to be less enthusiastic about texts chosen for class use. Guthrie describes the process of being fully immersed in a book as *enjoyment in a book for its own sake* and he cites Csikszentmihalyi (1991) as describing the act of getting lost in a book as *a state of total absorption or flow.* Teachers described and recognised the same phenomenon of students being totally lost in a book. Goodwyn (2008) reported a similar phenomenon after interviewing a cohort of trainee teachers. Theory is reflected in practice and it would seem to be axiomatic that the first step to achieving any learning object through the use of fiction as a tool must be to find a text which will engage both teacher and pupil.

There is no doubt that the teachers interviewed valued their students enjoying what they read; they were also aware of what kind of books and titles appealed

to their students. They spoke of the success of lessons where students were immersed in the experience of reading a book. However, it often happens that the curriculum learning has to predominate as one teacher noted, reflecting the views of others interviewed:

> *We do get carried away with what we think we ought to be teaching and what kids actually like to read.*

Potential for engagement may signify quality; this is not necessarily reflected in pedagogy. Potential for engagement is also complex in curriculum terms when the chosen text has to fulfil learning objectives which may be beyond the narrative and when the timetable itself militates against the actual reading of the story. One teacher said:

> *.. my Yr8 class: I only have them on a Thursday and Friday and then we've got to wait a whole week before we carry on reading the book and they forget what's happened. So I think it has to be quite memorable or quite simple for them to follow because I'd be: what happened last lesson and some of them don't have a clue.*

Teachers and students would both want the fiction they read to be engaging. For the teacher, asked to teach a whole class the same text in timetabled lessons, this can be problematic as the quotation above indicates. There is also much less room to consider pupil engagement within the strictures of meeting the curriculum demands; Daisey (2010) describes this in her own research as a tension between classroom pleasure in books and curriculum demands *to* tear *books to metaphorical shreds* (p.680). I will explore how the curriculum demands lead to pragmatic choices of text rather than choices rooted in pedagogy in the next section.

5.4.2 Curriculum and examination imperatives

The schooling of quality in fiction, which is the theme of this section, is embodied in curriculum and examination requirements. These curriculum and examination imperatives dictate certain forms of learning (Robson et al, 2010) and very often prescribe actual titles or authors which must be studied. However these requirements are not rooted in pedagogy or supported by theory. Writing from a

New Zealand perspective, Locke (2008) also describes the stultifying effect of national assessment on pupil engagement with and enjoyment of text, indicating that this is also a global problem.

The idea of teaching to the examination is not new and has been noted from Newbolt (1921) onwards. This study has already considered that teachers are now under extra pressure to conform, comply and achieve good examination results, meaning that all too often the pleasure in reading the book is lost through the need to cover certain literary or linguistic features and give the students the knowledge to ensure they can pass the examination or meet curriculum driven targets. To substantiate this, I refer back to the teacher who noted that once the educational purpose becomes paramount *then all the entertainment and interest is lost.* This supports Sumara's (2001) contention that:

> *while students are asked to consider the literary text 'open' when they respond personally, they are also asked to consider it 'closed'. (p.173)*

Whilst the teachers in this study philosophically wanted to develop a love of reading, they found this difficult to address when there is so much else to cover through the reading of a fiction text, as I have indicated in the preceding section. Not only are there pressures to support pupils in achieving good examination results, but this study demonstrates that the text also becomes a vehicle to deliver other curriculum requirements.

The data reveal a lack of professional autonomy in choosing what to teach and, indeed, how to teach it. This resonates with other concurrent research. Goodwyn (2012b) reflects on this as teaching becoming *scripted*, dictated by the need to provide a *'right answer'* (p.49). Turvey and Yandell (2011) see assessment as a driving force of the teaching of literature and the teachers as simply the deliverer of the curriculum.

There is ample research about the effectiveness of teaching grammar and writing skills contextually (Myhill et al, 2013), however not all teachers are confident with grammar teaching (ibid). It may be considered problematic that a number of teachers in this study saw the study of a fiction text in terms of opportunities to

create *simile walls,* or that they deconstructed the text firstly in literary terms (plot, character) and then moved on to seek out finer linguistic points (similes, metaphors, adverbs, adjectives). This may distract from the narrative and lead to students seeing a work of fiction as another form of textbook rather than a discrete work of literature, part of a particular tradition. This study gives specific classroom example of concerns noted across the research literature (Beach et al, 2010; Richards-Kamal, 2008; Goodwyn, 2008, 2012a; Bodman, Taylor, Morris, 2012; Domaille, 2003; Bousted, 2002) that recent curriculum iterations, particularly in England, have led to fragmentation of text and reducing opportunities to study whole text in class for its literary merits or for developing enjoyment in reading.

It was also notable that those teachers who were using fiction as a springboard to creative writing felt that they had to do this as an extra-curricular activity because there was no space for it during allotted teaching time. I have already noted in this chapter the issues of an intellectual shift from teaching a work of fiction as a whole to the fragmentation of the text where the constituent parts serve to meet diverse learning objectives; this in turn has consequences for how the actual text is conceptualised by teachers and pupils alike. This leads to the schooled concept of *doing* a book which I consider in the next section.

5.4.3 Doing a book

It is significant that both students and teachers talked of *doing* a book and that the expression *to do a text* is commonplace in the vernacular of the English Department, familiar to any English teacher and present in the interview transcripts. For example:

> *I've got a top Y8 class and we're doing Boy in the Striped Pyjamas.*
>
> *..there's only like a few ones that we do in KS3.*

Neither of these two teachers in any way devalued the process of reading fiction with students in class. However the use of *do* indicates pragmatic responses to curriculum requirements. *Reading* and *studying* a novel can have the same generic connotations as *doing;* Cliff Hodges (2010a) calls this same phenomenon

exposure to literature. For the students *doing* can mean enduring reading a class text together. For the teacher the term *do* is overladen with the plethora of objects and rules surrounding the mediation of the text as a tool as I have described above. The following quotation from one teacher who really wanted her pupils to enjoy reading, encapsulates the professional dilemma:

> *I think the text used as a class read you have to bear in mind the balance and so many issues with the different abilities , different genders, and trying to keep a whole class interested with certain tasks related to the novel,*

This is not to say that classroom learning activities arising from the reading of a work of fiction are inappropriate. It is more the need for a clear understanding linked to an articulated pedagogy of how a text is being used, read or studied. Yandell (2012) makes the important point that the activities and approaches to *'doing'* (p.52) a novel in the classroom are different from an individual and independent engagement with a text. He notes the fact that most, or even all of those in the class will not have chosen to read the text, citing the problems this research has identified of: syllabus imperatives, HoD directives, or stock cupboard limitations. However he sees this as a positive, arguing that a joint engagement with the text as a class is as valid a way of reading as the silent individual reading mode. Furthermore, Yandell notes that a carefully structured management of both reading and accompanying activities can result in a complex reinterpretation of the text content and meaning. Like Yandell, though, I would argue that consistent excellent practice is dependent on a carefully articulated pedagogy on how to achieve this. Whilst Yandell uses *'doing'* a novel in the classroom as an accolade of positive engagement, this research has shown that often teachers flounder trying to find a supportive pedagogy in how to *do* a novel within current curriculum requirements.

The problem is also exacerbated when, as several teachers noted, the department curriculum only allows practically for the study of one novel a year, even at KS3. In the case of the study of pre-1914 fiction as required by the NC in England, often this means not studying a whole text. In terms of engagement with the act of reading fiction the partial reading of a whole text results in many students not experiencing a story from start to finish. Tickle (2013), citing Robert

Eaglestone (2013), notes, in this context, the likelihood that more texts will be studied in extract form if there is an edict to study an increasing range of classic texts from an earlier era.

If an object specified by the community circle (p.165) representing government policy makers, is that a student is exposed to more complex texts than they can easily decode and assimilate, there is, according to the data in this study, a real danger that texts will not be read in their entirety. I refer to the HoD in a selective school who commented on the fact that he never read *Great Expectations* with a class in its entirety. He explained this in terms of time and the challenge for even high-achieving students to sustain interest in a long and challenging text outside their immediate experience; this is a very genuine practical problem and I have already indicated that it is not limited to my own sample but is a global problem too (McLean Davies et al, 2013).

In some instances teachers are also managing classes where few young people read willingly and have often not read a whole text for some time; in these cases reading parts of texts makes curriculum sense. However the result may be that the students have some knowledge of the book but may be losing the sense of sustained narrative and character development, giving substance to Cliff Hodges' (2010a) concern of the danger of separating the processes of reading from the processes of understanding complete works of literature in their own right. Ironically this concept of sustained narrative and character development, is a recurrent criteria for quality in a work of fiction found in the data when teachers define this quality fiction in isolation from how they may use the same fiction in the classroom.

It was evident from the data that, in theory, most of the teachers wanted their students to enjoy the experience of reading and for these same students to engage fully with understanding what made an effective story; the teachers were explicit about this in interviews and this also resonates with recently reported findings from Goodwyn (2012a) and Westbrook (2013). Teachers spoke eloquently about those aspects of the writer's craft which made for an effective novel: well-crafted plot, strong characters, elements of surprise such as cliff

hangers, good vocabulary. The students, too, were familiar with the terminology of what made for an engaging novel and they seemed as familiar with these literary based criteria as the teachers in their descriptions of what made them want to read a book.

Sumara et al (2006) note the problem of *personal readings of literary fiction in school settings* (p.64) because of the need for pupils to be both fluent readers and have the *decoding skills* necessary for them to become immersed in a text and to make a personal interpretation of that same text. However the students were very clear about what led to personal enjoyment of a novel and this fits with the quotation from Guthrie (2002) in Section *5.4.1* where they wanted to become *immersed* in a story with an interesting plot and characters which also had some element of surprise.

However, whilst the students were content to accept the novel at the level of story and to get *lost* in it, a recurrent theme, when discussing classroom practice teachers seemed driven to look beyond the inherent pleasure of a good story to the learning that could accompany it. There was little perceived opportunity to prioritise enjoyment in reading when the teachers interviewed focused on elements of their teaching. The need for learning, the object of the activity, is clearly an accepted part of normal classroom practice. However the lack of clarity about the function of the text in the learning leads to conflict in how it is used and presented to a class. For the teachers this learning was almost always curriculum driven with an object beyond the structure of the fiction. The simile wall again exemplifies this kind of practice which compartmentalises and fragments the notion of a whole book. This is substantial research evidence demonstrating a view of the classroom mediated by what McLean Davies et al, (2013) refer to as *a competitive, academic curriculum* (p.231). Similarly it raises concern about the disappearance of the work of fiction as simply literature in the classroom, a point resonating with Goodwyn (2012a).

In practice this also impacts on perceptions of the quality of a book when it is needed to mediate a range of learning objects which may be only loosely connected and not all related to the literary function of the text. This was a

common feature across schools and individual teachers. It would appear that this relates to the current conceptualisation of *doing* a book. By considering a book as something to be *done* rather than read or enjoyed, the concept of the work of fiction has been transformed, in activity/curriculum terms, from a cultural artefact, within a literary frame of reference, to a mediating tool with multiple potential for use in achieving a range of objects.

Crucially, not all the uses of the work of fiction in its role as a tool will link to its cultural existence as a whole work of literature. This is one way in which teachers' perceptions of the works of fiction in the English classroom can be seen to have become effectively *schooled*, that is acquired a significance linked not to its intrinsic value but to its potential as a tool for teaching. As a result, this can be seen to impact on teachers' perceptions of quality in terms of works of fiction. These perceptions are not now being conceptualised solely in terms of literary merit but also in the altered sense of how well they fit with the needs of the classroom Goodwyn (1992); Goodwyn and Findlay (1999). This finding also gives weight to Cliff Hodges' (2010a) assertion, noted earlier, that the place of literature in the curriculum is *assumed rather than discussed* (p.61).

This is reinforced through the data. It can be seen from the data that 11 – 16 year olds enjoyed books that made them think and that they were happy for that process to remain internal. In this sense the students in the study viewed the work of fiction differently from the teacher who has taken on a new and *schooled* attitude to it. For teachers, however, the thinking needed to be explicit and explored and lead to further learning which was again almost always curriculum linked and not necessarily to aspects of a novel defined in literary terms.

Additionally, whilst teachers are aware of the potential for fiction, particularly the relatively new genre of YAL, for the 11 – 16 year old age range to give vicarious insight into situations of adolescence and growing up, very often an issues based text may have to fit in with PSHE or cross-curricular requirements or address particular cultural or historical approaches. These all represent objects and responsibilities imposed by a community outside the immediate department. This may also contribute to a conceptualisation of doing a book when a further layer

of curriculum requirement is imposed on the teacher by another circle of community and the further potential for fuzziness of interpretations as the departmental and whole school boundaries intersect. In this instance engagement with any issues represented in texts may also be even more dependent on books available, school and department policies and the individual teacher's own preferences; this may also mean that the thematic learning potential of a book as literature may not be fully realised.

Just as the idea of *quality* in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds has become schooled, so have approaches to using these texts with students in school. The *fuzziness* of meaning of *doing* the book may have led to an inevitable loss of a pedagogical purpose to accompany the practicalities of using the text to address curriculum requirements. There is no sense that teachers have lost sight of the potential of literature or their desire to enthuse pupils about reading. However they are also aware of the need for pragmatism in meeting curriculum and examination targets.

What I have described here illustrates very clearly the complexity around mediation of literature in the classroom in England and particularly the hierarchical power structure influencing delivery of the curriculum for the teaching of English Literature. The Diagram of the Circles of Community (Table 4.7) shows this. Teachers are conduits for policy decisions rather than enabled to use and develop professional skills and knowledge; specifically knowledge related to literature. This is illustrated specifically through the analysis of the data here.

5.4.4 Challenging Pupils

Just as the idea of *doing* a book has become a shorthand way of describing how a fiction text may be used in school to meet curriculum needs, so *challenge* appeared in the data as one way of describing the effect the teachers wanted books to have on the pupils which were used in class or recommended for private reading. As with quality, *challenge* is a term in common currency across both schools and departments. It is used with authority but there is no precise definition; rather the *challenge* can refer to a range of educational aspirations.

The following quotations illustrate how wide-ranging the notions of challenge can be:

> *..it just became very monotonous and it wasn't very challenging at all ;*
>
> *I think it's challenging in terms of its vocabulary I think it's challenging in terms of its ideas;*
>
> *…you can tackle more challenging subject matter by the time you get to year 9;*
>
> *…to kind of challenge them to think about books in maybe a different way*

Challenge is thus another example of an expression that has become *schooled* and can effectively be a portmanteau way of expressing a need to meet learning targets set by the institution or implied by the curriculum.

As the quotations illustrate, these learning aspirations can include: improving reading skills, extending repertoire in terms of authors or genres, developing the students' own creative writing skills, improving the chances of examination or assessment success, developing understanding of textual and literary devices, or developing the range of pleasure and enjoyment to be gained from reading. The students also referred to the need to challenge themselves, although in these instances the students generally referred to improving their opportunities for success in examinations. It links, too, to the need to make students in school think explicitly about issues in a book which I described in the preceding section.

The whole notion of *challenge* is deeply bound up with rules and responsibility and demonstrates the professional complexities for the teacher who wishes to do the best for each pupil but often feels constrained in the manner of doing this. This is a further example of conceptual shift: the need for there to be perceivable and accountable outcomes to an activity. This can be conceived of as a movement in teaching from *a service ethic to a performance ethic* (Bodman, Taylor, Morris, 2012, p.17). This is something driven by external forces, from the more powerful circles of the communities. However the driving importance of pupil performance and teacher accountability has come to be accepted by departments and teachers as a pedagogical necessity, despite the lack of

rationale or research evidence for this. Thus the idea of quality being a work of fiction which provides amorphous challenge has become schooled as a concept without a pedagogical root and without an underpinning theory to support it.

5.4.5 Schooled approaches to private reading

So far this discussion has focused mainly on how fiction is used in a classroom context. From the data it was absolutely clear that teachers really wanted to guide their students towards developing a discriminating love of reading for pleasure but struggled to do this in a school context. Asked if she got opportunities to recommend books for private reading, one teacher said:

> *I haven't done this year not through lack of opportunity I think it's just because you are so focussed on what they have to know for GCSE and getting them through reading what they have to know for their own exams of for their course work and it's kind of…well for me it's not been something I've kind of really thought about which I guess is a real shame but like some of my students I know they read outside school so we have a discussion about different books that they've been reading but I haven't been actively like suggesting…*

Whilst a number of schools do make provision for private reading it does not usually happen as part of normal teaching and is often an imposed ten minute slot at the start of the lesson. Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) has been a feature of English classrooms for a number of decades and the success of this in promulgating individual engagement with books has been demonstrated (McCracken, 1971; Westbrook 2013). However there is now a tension in implementing this in classrooms created by the teacher's need to fill every teaching moment productively, driven by the rules and responsibilities surrounding the activity. This is another consequence of what I am terming the *schooled* perceptions of how to use fiction in the classroom and it impacts on private reading too.

McCracken (1971) introduced rules to allow this reading time he viewed as *precious* (another subjective term) to be absolutely uninterrupted; this was the key to the success of the scheme. The reality now appears to be that the teachers rarely read with the pupils and often use the time for administrative tasks and

taking registers, part of the pressures from outside the classroom. McCracken stressed the importance of children bringing their own books (he eschewed the use of magazines and newspapers) but teachers in this study spoke of boxes of books in the classroom from which students could choose when they wanted a book. In practice this often meant students chose a different book for each USSR session. Westbrook (2013) returned to this by commending a version of USSR, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) as still beneficial in allowing students in the classroom to read substantial sections of text uninterrupted.

One teacher in this research spoke enthusiastically of the potential of USSR for encouraging pleasure in reading and if the students were fully involved in their individual books he was also, unusually, even willing to extend the USSR sessions; he did this even with Year 11 groups close to examinations. Another teacher noted that it was:

> *…departmental policy that there's a box of books in each classroom but children/students/young people are encouraged to bring their own private reading*

Other teachers were pleased to have recorded that they gave time to private reading but not all had time to pursue this. The fact that there was a departmental policy relating to private reading in school indicates that the community has created a rule. However it is likely that the rule has effectively become schooled and may be interpreted in terms of compliance not pedagogy. As this happens the underlying theory may cease to drive the activity and which then becomes transactional or pragmatic.

My own observation of cohorts of trainees in classrooms has also confirmed over and over again the frequency with which USSR has become a transactional activity, allowing the teacher to complete administrative tasks. The object of private reading at the beginning of a lesson can be theorised as confused: there is little opportunity to discuss or share books (Guthrie, 2002) and the exercise is often a control mechanism, an internal rule for the community of the classroom, to allow a smooth transition to the main activity.

This same tension can be observed in the use of the school library. It is another instance of how perceptions about books and reading can be *schooled* and how the object has changed from an opportunity to encourage pleasure in private reading. The HoD who spoke at length of the importance of both a skilled school librarian and valuing time in the library, encapsulated the dilemma. Lack of liaison between departments and library staff often means that neither can meet the other's needs and certainly not those of the 11 – 16 year old students. Systems of institutional censorship can lead to students not being permitted to read the books that interest them; this may deter them from library use and is directly linked to institutional rules.

There is a further tension in the current development of Reading Acceleration Schemes, which are about developing reading comprehension and fluency. More often than not the books related to the scheme are kept in the library and the required periodic assessment is also completed on computers situated in the library. This serves to confirm a view of a work of fiction, even when written for the specific age group, in both classroom and library as something linked to specific assessment objectives: a view also likely to be shared by the teachers and the 11 – 16 year olds in school. This further illustrates that changing practice brings with it new perceptions. The new, *schooled*, view of the library can be conceptualised as the library representing a place not just for reading but for assessment on reading too.

Sustained opportunities for discussing books for pleasure existed but often as extra-curricular activities such as the Carnegie Award Shadowing where the books discussed were from a pre-ordained list of texts selected by librarians. One teacher summed up the schooling of this very effectively:

> *if you go to the Carnegie presentations and listen to what the students enjoy it's not necessarily the same as what adults and teachers enjoy and that's kind of a hard gulf to bridge.*

Whilst research (Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008b) and opinions from 11 – 16 year olds in this study have demonstrated that students are most open to reading recommendations of books from their peers, there is often little opportunity for this. However the teacher who said:

I believe a great deal in peer recommendations so I spend a lot of time in classes: whose reading what why is that good

represents an ideal – an effective blend of pedagogy and practice demonstrating that this ideal is also a possibility.

5.4.6 Summary

The study has thus indicated how fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for both private reading and curriculum use has been schooled. This has led to curricular pragmatism in the choice of texts and the classroom activities arising from the reading of those texts. There is no diminution in the teachers' desire to encourage pupils to read for pleasure in reading but in this study teachers reported that there were less dedicated opportunities to support pupils' private reading.

In the next section I will explore the possible consequences of this schooling of fiction and how it can lead to professional tension for the teachers.

5.5 How this interpretation of *quality* contributes to professional tensions in the teaching and presenting of fiction to 11 – 16 year olds.

I have defined division of labour in terms of the Activity Triangle as responsibility. This seems to better reflect the situation the data from this study demonstrated, where the division of labour for individuals interviewed was underpinned by the responsibilities expected of them by every circle of the community. I have already noted the fact that in this study there is a considerable overlap between community, rules and responsibility in the achievement of any defined object related to the use of fiction. There is tension in the view of responsibility reflected in the data; this often arises from the close and broader community of which the individual teacher feels part, as I have noted in the previous section.

Similarly the use of CHAT as an analytical tool shows how there is an interdependence between community, rules and responsibility leading to further complexity and tension in how to effectively juggle conflicting demands. Rules

devolve from the various communities and range from local, departmental minutiae to national imperatives. The individual teachers, as I have noted in the section on community (Section *5.2.1*) at the start of this discussion, are answerable to many communities, and can often feel not only very lacking in any sense of professional autonomy but also obliged to fulfil many rules and responsibilities, all of which bring their own professional tensions. So not only is the individual teacher subject to a range of often conflicting external requirements, increasingly there is limited opportunity for the classroom teacher to assume responsibility for choice of texts in the classroom. However HoDs interviewed and cited by classroom teachers during interviews did see the choosing of texts for the department as their responsibility. For individual teachers and HoDs class texts used had, too, to be open to the *scrutiny* of the wider community.

The tensions are complex. At an individual level teachers have a range of responsibilities and a professional duty to adhere to the rules of the several communities of which they are members; this is well illustrated in the data through the lens of CHAT. Yet paradoxically they can also lack professional autonomy. The teachers are aware that curriculum and examination requirements predominate. One teacher expressed his strong displeasure at the dominance of the curriculum: *I think at KS4 the national curriculum in terms of literature is utterly appalling* and continued to qualify his distaste by citing, for example, *turgid writing* and deploring the absence of reading for its own sake as a worthwhile activity in the curriculum. Other teachers were more circumspect but still fore-fronted the influence of the curriculum and examinations on their practice whilst giving the sense that they would like to spend more time sharing books for their own sake with their students. One teacher really wanted to get students to read fiction but expressed this entirely in curriculum terms:

> *I see their love of reading as being a sort of conduit to success at school, obviously if love of reading turns into more love of reading that's fine by me as well.*

I will explore this tension further in the next section.

5.5.1 Pleasure or examination success?

Despite the feeling expressed by individual teachers that there was a responsibility to inculcate a love of reading, nevertheless I have demonstrated through the data that many teachers saw their key responsibility as that of achieving the object of getting good examination results or the object of addressing key learning objectives linked to the curriculum. This means that the quality of the text becomes secondary to its potential to support assessable success. This substantiates and builds on earlier reported research (Miller, 2003; Goodwyn, 2012a; Beach et al, 2010; Richards-Kamal, 2010; Locke, 2008). Whilst there is a clear responsibility for ensuring the effective learning of the child, the teachers may feel no overt responsibility for developing interest in a range of literature given the limitations of the rules imposed by the layers of the different communities. The responsibility is rather to ensure a text (tool) which will fit with the required teaching and learning purposes. Alongside this is the parallel pedagogical responsibility, which is to match a nurturing of pleasure in reading with a development of the mechanical skills of effective decoding of words on the page; Cliff Hodges (2010a) has also detailed the problems in this dual perception and subsequent lack of clarity of purpose. Whilst Guthrie (2002) notes that children who enjoy reading become better at the skills of reading, this is not part of the pedagogy demonstrated through pragmatic choices of texts in schools. Paradoxically the curriculum does not link enjoyment with progress in reading skills. A recent study (Sullivan and Brown, 2013) also indicates that reading for pleasure leads to progress in all areas of the curriculum, including mathematics and is significant for cognitive development. We can see from the quotation at the end of the previous section that teachers understand this but it is not embedded in a pedagogy.

The data have evidenced how teachers are very concerned with their role in helping their students achieve academic success be this in final GCSE examinations, or in ongoing assessment, or simply in becoming better comprehenders of and decoders of the written word; in one way this is a continuation of the debate in the eighteenth century, noted in Chapter 2, between Samuel Coleridge and Jane Johnson about the tension between using literature

for moral improvement or to develop the imagination. On the other hand it introduces a professional tension because most teachers in the study stated that they wanted students to enjoy reading. However the interpretation of their professional responsibility, linked to the feeling of a lack of professional autonomy means that the teachers in this specific research find little space for encouraging the enjoyment in reading that they say they value, a problem also reported by Goodwyn (2012a) and by Manuel, Robinson (2003) where the latter are explicit about prescribed texts making non-readers out of adolescents. As I noted above, enjoyment does not seem to inform the current schooled pedagogy which informs the choice and use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds.

5.5.2 Issues of professional autonomy

Viewing the data through the lens of CHAT highlights that teachers are making pragmatic choices about their approaches to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for both class use and private reading. For a teacher who feels disempowered or lacking in autonomy in terms of professional choices, as I outlined in the previous section, there is less tension in assuming the responsibilities and thus the rules of the communities than in trying to challenge the rules. The teacher who chose to give students choice of text to read in class was aware that this was problematic in terms of the departmental community expectations and she felt a conflict. The teacher who railed against the examination syllabus texts was very angry about these externally imposed rules, which he did not respect. He was even angrier because he knew he had no professional choice but to comply without possibility of compromise. His anger was a manifestation of real and more widespread professional tensions where rejecting the practice and rules of the communities, close and more removed, cause professional tension. However was this any more worrying than the more prevalent apparently passive acceptance of the communities' expectations, rules and responsibilities where enculturation into a community appears to have removed much professional autonomy? The lack *of agency* and *growing accountability* (Bodman, Taylor, Morris, 2012, p.22) reported by the teachers interviewed for this research is also part of a broader, international problem.

The data also show that there is not just a lack of communication within individual departments but that this also extends to the school library. In some schools there was dialogue between teachers and school librarians, in others none. Where there was communication it was often between the HoD and the librarians. It was notable that none of the participants in this small scale study referred in any way to a common aim within the school community to inculcate a love of reading which extended beyond the idea of the book as an educational tool, although individuals were clear that enjoyment and pleasure in the act of reading is what they wanted to achieve.

Bourdieu (1977) and Lave and Wenger (1991) indicate that the community needs to articulate an aim and work together to fulfil it, for it to become successfully integrated as a community practice. There is also little room for debate about quality with the rationale for choices of text being linked so often to examination and curriculum necessities where in depth, prescribed knowledge of a particular aspect of the book (the tool) is part of the object. This is not to say that such discussion about pleasure in reading did not exist within the departmental community. However the community aims reported in this study now seem to be focused more on tangible academic success, at school and department levels, as I have already noted, and this does not appear to leave much curriculum room for celebrating a love of reading despite the wish of teachers to encourage this at a personal level. Despite this trend being reported in research over a number of years, for example Goodwyn (2008, 2012a, b), this current study reported here indicates that the curriculum demands have become more instrumental through the first years of the twentieth century, rather than less.

5.5.3 The students

The students, who are also part of the community, are arguably more disempowered than the teachers and more subject to the rules than any other part of the community. Yet it is important to see these students as active participants in the activity and capable of being wholly participant in achieving

any given object. Guthrie (2002) notes an important pedagogical principle when he records that:

> *Children who like to share books with peers and participate responsibly in a community of learners are likely to be intrinsically motivated readers. Social motivation leads to increased amount of reading and high achievement in reading (online)*

The data also reveal a facet not reported on in the published research. That is, that it appears that the young people in this study appeared not to be consulted at all about the purchase of books for use in school; they did not mention such consultation in the interviews and neither did the teachers. As I noted above, there was only one instance in this study where a teacher allowed the students to choose, from a selection pre-determined by her, which should be the next novel read together in class. It is also notable that she presented this as an experiment, tried once, and which involved her stepping outside the department's normal modes of operating, thus challenging that community's rules.

This appears to indicate that the assuming of some sort of autonomy by an individual teacher, which may in some way challenge the rules of the particular community, may present difficulties. Although there was only one case of a teacher making such a challenge in this study, perhaps the fact that there was only one such example reported by any teacher in the study indicates that the problem of operating autonomously may indeed exist.

Potentially this may lead to great professional conflict and tension as individuals strive to resolve differences between their own personal views on literature and reading with the requirements of the communities within which they operate. It is another feature of the lack of teacher autonomy reported by Smethem and Day (2009); Smulyan (2003); Day, Fernandez et al (2000), Gorodetsky and Barak (2009). Lapp and Fisher (2008) discovered that, if given the opportunity, students in school were enthusiastic about participating in choice of texts. Allowing these students ownership of text led to increased levels of reading and increased enthusiasm about it. However the power balance is complex, with much power effectively being exerted from outside the school community through the

influence of curriculum and assessment requirement and less overt account being taken of the needs of the students. This is again reminiscent of Manuel and Robinson's (2003) comments about the negative impact on readers of prescribed texts. The lack of teacher autonomy can also be seen to increase the powerlessness of the pupils.

5.5.4 Professional knowledge

Many teachers noted that they lacked time to read YAL. Whilst a number of the teachers interviewed considered keeping up to date with YAL as a significant aspect of their professional role, particularly for recommending private reading to their students, none of them found it easy to fit this in. They did however say that they wanted to choose texts that their students would enjoy. This again relates to findings on teacher lack of autonomy reported by a number of researchers (Smethem and Day, 2009; Smulyan, 2003; Day, Fernandez et al, 2000; Locke, 2002; Turvey and Yandell, 2011; Goodwyn, 2012a) and may go some way to explain the research reported in the Review of the Literature (OFSTED, 2003) that teachers lack knowledge of fiction written specifically for the 11 – 16 year old age range. The Review of the Literature demonstrated that YAL is an acknowledged and valuable literary form (Trites, 2000; Zipes, 2001); it is also a powerful tool with a range of purposes from encouraging reading to addressing complex issues of growing up. We may draw links between this and the research (Guthrie, 2002; Sullivan and Brown, 2013) indicating that children become better readers and make better curriculum progress if they enjoy reading. The young people in this study replicated those from previous studies (Jenkinson, 1946) in enjoying current and up to date books written for their age group. This study points to a need for a new pedagogy which relates to theories about enjoyment in reading and progress and encourages teachers to choose texts relevant to their pupils' interests. The findings of this study confirm the value of starting where the child is in developing reading interests (Hall and Coles, 1999; Greenleaf, Hinchman, 2009). This has yet to influence policy.

There is a similar tension in the UK government recommendations (Gove, 2011a) that children should read for pleasure accompanied by the advice that they should each read 50 books a year with the emphasis on novels and writers from the

traditional canon of English literature. This disempowers teachers and does not encourage developing knowledge of YAL or indeed start where the child is. It also imposes another layer of responsibility on individual teachers in a curriculum which has effectively moved teachers away from considering whole texts and from having the time to promulgate the pleasures of reading for pleasure.

5.5.5 Summary

The effects of complex rules from all circles of the community, from policy makers through whole school and departments and connected with fiction for 11 – 16 year olds has led to tension. One area of tension lies in the choice of texts and another in balancing encouraging private reading within a structured and demanding curriculum. Theory indicates the importance of young people enjoying reading; theory has also, over time, shown the value of young people reading contemporary books, with which they connect, as well as reading the so called classics. Much of the tension demonstrated in this section results from reactive response to curriculum and examination requirements in school. Whilst teachers are aware of pedagogy linked to the value of young people engaging with fiction there is little time practically for interface between theory and practice at classroom level.

This is a result of the schooling of quality discussed in the previous section. In the final section of this Discussion I will explore how the schooling of quality impacts on classroom practice in terms of teachers' choices of, attitudes to and approaches towards the use of fiction in the classroom and also to recommendations of fiction to pupils for private reading.

5.6 The consequences of the *schooling of quality* in relation to the use of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds on teachers and students of English in the school system for curriculum purposes and for private reading.

The attitudes of the teacher respondents recorded in the data seemed to fit more closely with Bourdieu's (1977) idea of Habitus, where members of a society

subconsciously, unquestioningly even, adopt common ideals and approaches. Despite some apparent shared values within schools, nevertheless there was no consistency within schools about what was *quality,* with individuals expressing some subjective interpretations of *quality* in line with the problems inherent in the use of this word demonstrated in the Review of the Literature. Shared values expressed by individual class teachers often related to their desire to please the external communities or to external targets such as examination results as well as enthusing their students about reading. The inconsistency noted in the data may be indicative of the complex ways both teachers and pupils respond to the tension of reacting to the conflicting demands and expectations of the differing communities to which they feel accountable.

There is further confirmation of this complexity and the tension of conflicting demands found in the lack of power or autonomy expressed by individual teachers in this study. This has also been noted by Sumara (2001) and Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) in relation to curriculum demands. Current research in England and internationally (Smethem and Day, 2009; Smulyan, 2003; Day, Fernandez et al, 2000; Beach et al, 2010; McLean Davies et al, 2013; Goodwyn, 2012a; Westbrook, 2013) also support findings reported here that external pressures, often school management, curriculum, inspection or examination expectations, are adversely affecting the professional autonomy of teachers. Writing in February 2013 from a professional viewpoint, *The Guardian's* Secret Teacher recorded the following observation:

> *This interfering, ahem, support even reaches as far as the reading books I use. After reading a book with my class that they had adored and which is wildly popular with children of their age across the country, I was told that I couldn't read the sequel with them because "the children need to be exposed to a variety of authors". I was then told which books had been ordered for my book corner.*

This expresses with passion feelings also noted by many of the teachers in my study and indicates a viewpoint not unique to the teachers I interviewed; it also provides a link from practice to the principles in the research that interface between theory and practice.

Whilst whole school reading policies are not new, initiatives which were supportive of this, such as Literacy Across the Curriculum (LAC, (2001) have been swallowed up by new imperatives from the communities beyond the school. No teacher in this study, apart from the teacher who referred to a tutor who kept a box of books for the students in the tutor group, referred to other departments in the institution community having any responsibility for using fiction or encouraging reading. This again seems to indicate the department operating within a discrete circle of the larger institutional community. Although a small number of teachers referred to sharing books with pupils, on the whole there was little space or time given to this activity. Students seemed to share books they had enjoyed with each other outside the classroom. This is clearly admirable, but in order for a whole community consensus on worthwhile books to read, a culture of sharing texts and talking about them is important: within the classroom, within the department and within the entire school community; this pedagogy underpinned some of the LAC (2001) initiatives.

In this context, as well, teachers spoke of the influence of parents negatively, as people who might censor text choices. Similarly the students in this project did not often refer to their parents as significant mentors of reading. This, too, confirms the literature as does the finding that, when parents did advise, mothers made more suggestions but that fathers' ideas were often more interesting (Hopper, 2005). It would appear that there is room to encourage dialogue about fiction for 11 - 16 year olds between teachers, young people and parents and that this will need to be ongoing, in the light of an identified and acknowledged common purpose or purposes. Where the definition of *quality* fiction is so fluid and so subject to community pressures and expectations there can be little cohesion; Star and Griesemer's (1989); *fuzzy* boundary objects. Crucially there is also a very clear tension between the concept of the use of quality fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for curriculum purposes and for encouraging reading for pleasure. Whilst research has focused on what children read (Jenkinson, 1946; Whitehead, 1977; Benton, 2000; Hall and Coles, 1999), there is no clear pedagogy to underpin the different uses and purpose for fiction in the school community context.

The data from this study demonstrated the teachers' sense of a lack of power or professional autonomy. This lack of power related both to choice of texts and also to the curriculum expectations they had to meet. Some felt obliged to take on the views of the various communities in which they operated (school, department). For some teachers their lack of autonomy in the community offered professional safety and removed the need to take individual decisions, for others there was tension in the imposition of texts and approaches with which they felt less comfortable. Whilst, for example, departmental community aims are generally shared and almost always relate to the success of the individual child, there can be pressure felt by classroom teachers to please certain aspects of the community beyond the department. This confirms the value of Gorodetsky and Barak's (2009) findings which record the value of creating opportunities for practitioners within departments to work on common pedagogical goals in order to develop a pedagogy to clarify Star and Griesemer's (1989) *fuzzy* boundary objects. According to the data this might include not teaching texts that might upset parents, or ensuring that the choice of text for examination classes will give a greater chance of examination success and thus fulfilling school management requirements in terms of examination league tables. These are, however, short term goals and do not have a strong pedagogical basis.

This disempowerment of the individual teacher and the apparent shift in priorities for the community represented by the department to external quantifiable goals such as budgets and examination results may have reduced opportunities for discussion about the tool represented by the work of fiction and, indeed, the common object to be achieved through the mediation of the tool. This may also, according to the data, be because curriculum choices of text have become more circumscribed, again due to the pressures from external circles of community. Heads of Department did see introducing new fiction as important and class teachers recognised the HoD's role in this without appearing, in terms of the data, to resent this. However this may be equally representative of the lack of autonomy felt by the individual teacher and link to theories of Habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). It is notable that Gorodetsky and Barak (2009) recorded that clarity and unified purpose was more readily achieved once there was a restoration of *pedagogical responsibilities* (p. 598) to teachers.

5.6.1 Boundary objects

It is very apparent from the data that there are different responses from the teachers in this study to institutional pressures from the communities beyond the department. Making connections to a lack of *pedagogical responsibilities*, Gorodetsky and Barak (2009), noted above, there often appears to be a lack of policy towards choice of texts for both class use and private reading within the community represented by the department. This relates to the lack of autonomy felt by the individual teacher, also noted above, but is also representative of the influence of the circles of community beyond the department.

There is also evidence in the data that pressures from the wider community to, for example, be responsible for examination successes, meant that consultation about the choice of tool, in terms of the work of fiction, had low priority against other demands of, for example, departmental budgeting and target-setting for the individual class teacher; again complex and conflicting demands and tensions This relates directly to the *fuzzy* nature of boundary objects, originally noted by Star and Griesemer (1989) and the confusion which can result from this lack of clarity.

Definitions of quality by both teachers and pupils in the study were also heavily dependent on other terminology which can be interpreted as equally *schooled*. Thus terms such as *good plot*, *character development*, and *good use of language we*re recurrent as both teachers and students strove to define what quality meant to them. Teachers and students appeared to be ultimately dependent on a shared, schooled language which has its roots in a literary heritage model of literary criticism but which has the same semantic fuzziness as quality.

When pushed to explain or define such terms as terms *good plot* further, students gave concrete examples from texts with which they were familiar. The texts the students referred to were not necessarily texts read as part of class activities either (Sarland, 1994; Zipes, 2002). The teachers also supported their responses with concrete example from texts, but they were equally likely to respond with the

collusive *you know* to myself as interviewer known to them to be participant in the teaching community. This is indicative of how pedagogic meaning may be schooled as with Street's (1996) *literary event*. It again resonates with Star and Grisemer's (1989) *fuzzy* boundary objects and to the problem of pedagogy undefined but tacitly accepted by a community described by Gorodetsky and Barak (2009). Whilst this study is not about semantics, nevertheless it has demonstrated a need for semantic precision when creating a pedagogic framework at any level.

5.6.2 School canon

The data in this study confirm many of the perspectives noted in the Review of the Literature (Chapter 2). The fiction viewed by teachers in the study as of quality was linked to curriculum prescription. Within schools there was reference across interviews and across questionnaires to particular fiction titles; but these often also referred to texts that were available in stock cupboards or specifically for examination use. So, whilst there were common titles recorded across the entire study, there were also common patterns within teachers from particular schools which were not replicated in other institutions. This was equally true of data from both interviews and questionnaires.

However, alongside this commonality of opinion, there was also an underlying frustration at the limitations imposed on choice of text by other members of both the close and broader community (HoD, pleasing parents). This indicates a lack of agency for the teachers and, whilst the limitations of an imposed school canon have been noted before (Fowler, 1908; Benton, 2000; Goodwyn, 1992), the study reported here allowed a cohort of teachers to indicate their own frustration. It is likely that this frustration will increase if new Government initiatives to further prescribe the literature 11 – 16 year olds are implemented (Gove, 2011b).

It is notable that the Australian Curriculum has already addressed this issue. The Australian Curriculum (2011), as I have shown in the Review of Literature, Chapter 2, offers a broader approach to the study of literature. This curriculum offers not only a range of strategies for the use of literature in the classroom but

also actively proposes that the study of literature should not present pupils with a recognised body of works, a canon, but should enable them to understand the historical and cultural processes by which these works come to be valued (p.8). The idea of prescribed texts is absent. This is in direct contrast to government moves in England to become increasingly prescriptive about what fiction children should read and indeed how much they should read in the course of a year (Gove, 2011a). The flexibility embodied in the Australian Curriculum for English is one that this research indicates would be appreciated by the teachers whose views are reported here. Interestingly the New Zealand Curriculum also demonstrates the effect of government initiatives in the current emphasis on literature representative of Maori or Pasifika culture; here the movement is towards prescribing literature which embraces a particular aspect of cultural, social and historical heritage rather than a wider literary tradition.

The position of the YAL genre within the perceived school canon was not clear. Works of fiction suitable for 11 – 16 year olds are shown in this study to still be those chosen by discerning adults or influenced by the opinions of powerful adults. There is an underlying desire to give students *cultural capital* through engagement with literature which maps more closely on to the notion of literary canon of Leavis (1943). This desire for *cultural capital* was articulated forcefully by one teacher but nevertheless implicit in views of others. It is another tension in the choosing and dissemination of appropriate literature for use in school.

Sarland (1994) and Zipes (2002) have demonstrated that literary taste, understanding and discrimination can be nurtured as well through YAL, including the *Maltesers* of this study. Additionally highly valued earlier studies (Jenkinson, 1946), and this study too, demonstrate the pleasure that children take in literature contemporary to them. There is also a body of research in the USA which points to the curriculum benefits of YAL (Trites, 2000; et al). However these aspects of research do not appear to have percolated through to pedagogical thinking about constructs for the curriculum related to English literature in England. This is true at both national and institutional level in England.

It also seems unlikely that the situation will change when teachers are ambivalent about YAL in general. Whilst some in the study spoke about the genre with enthusiasm, others were disinterested or even opposed to the perceived content and form of YAL. Whilst some teacher training is seen to be inclusive of the value of YAL in the curriculum for English, many teachers do not pursue this beyond training. This study confirmed the OFSTED (2003) findings about teachers' lack of knowledge about YAL for the 11 – 16 year old age range. There is a need to increase teacher engagement with YAL but also to seek ways of making current fiction a significant and developing part of the curriculum in addition to texts from earlier times considered worthy because of their canonical status. It is perhaps time for policy makers and teachers to listen more closely to the views of 11 – 16 year old students; these views are not a revelation but have been recorded in research over 60 years.

It seems, too that there is more chance of the teacher engaging students fully with a text if they themselves enjoy it. However the data in this study indicated that there were a range of difficulties militating against this. The first of these is the presciptiveness of the curriculum and examination choices of texts; this is both at department and national level and was a common theme. It is disappointing that teachers who, on the one hand say they wish to encourage a love of reading, on the other hand are not able to be proactive in choosing appropriate texts and are willing or obliged to use texts in the classroom which do not engage them. There is evidence (Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009) that providing opportunities for teachers to re-engage with pedagogical debate in order to make effective changes to grass root schooled practices, can have considerable and energising impact:

> *The change restored pedagogical responsibilities to teachers and made them part of the ongoing processes of addressing educational objectives, curricula, evaluation, and so on—features that had been stripped from their jurisdiction by centralized educational agencies.* (p.599)

There is also a danger of inequality of entitlement, depending on what texts a child encounters and which teachers they have in the course of their school career (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999). There is potential for this to be addressed

through the school syllabus and under the umbrella of a national syllabus. In practice this may not happen when the object is often a pragmatic one linked to examination success or the achievement of small, short term learning objectives at lesson level and not linked closely to an overarching pedagogy.

5.6.3 How to use texts in class

The New Zealand TLRI (2009) makes a valid point in the context of how teachers may choose to use literature. On p.29 the report notes the complexity of the English teacher's understanding of literature and cites the many influences on the teacher's professional development and classroom practice. Despite the frameworks provided by national curricula or local syllabus iterations, nevertheless each individual teacher will bring idiosyncratic approaches to the teaching of and understanding of a text and its quality. The TLRI report also notes pertinently that:

> *No one teacher of literature operates out of the same combination of discursive frames. (*p.29)

Both Engestrõm and Sannino (2010) and Goredtsky and Barak (2009) refer to the confused understanding of boundary objects. This confusion applies to theoretical understanding, pedagogical interests and also a personal philosophy all of which have cultural, social and historical influences and precedence at individual, institutional level and beyond.

It was evident from talking to the teachers and the students that the concept of *doing a* book, which I raised in Section *5.4.3* on the object of the use of the text in the classroom, meant that approaches to studying the book became mechanistic; the text became an adjunct to teaching skills rather than an entity in its own right. This resonates with Eaglestone's fears cited in Tickle (2013), talking about the government's current proposed changes to the examination syllabus he says:

> *Literary texts will be used, but only as a vehicle for pupils to improve, for instance, their ability in critical reading, comprehension and debating.'* (p.36)

This takes us back to the data from this study and, in particular, the *doing of* the book. When teachers spoke of their reasons for choosing texts beyond availability or examination necessity, they turned to how the book might be used in class. The text was first and foremost a resource which could provide material to meet lesson objectives: these objectives would not necessarily have a literary focus. I refer back to the tension inherent in reading a book as an entity or using it as a resource to illustrate literary or grammatical devices.

Further supporting the notion of the text used in class as an educational artefact or resource rather than a work of literature were the views of the teachers who chose a text for teaching by the teaching resources available with the book; this also resonates with findings by Beach et al, (2010). These might be departmental resources, prepared by other teachers or educational resources prepared and sold by publishers or available online. I have already noted the perceptive comment from TLRI (2009), above, relating to the fact that every teacher operates out of a different *discursive frame,* nevertheless a reliance on materials prepared by others means that the teacher views the text even more as artefact than structured literary narrative. The teacher using such resources, and choosing a text specifically for accompanying materials, may be interpreting the story through the lens of another, making their own engagement with the content of the narrative less significant and intense. In terms of focused learning through the medium of the text there may be no difference, possibly an even greater focus, however there is a parallel danger that the text will be presented simply as an implement and that the excitement in the structure and story will be lost.

5.7 General Summary

5.7.1 Theoretical implications

This study coincides with a new government thrust in England to encourage more reading, particularly of classic texts in school (Gove, 2011a). There are developments in theory represented in this study which relate closely to these

new government imperatives. This is significant because it has already been demonstrated through this study that government policy often seems notable for the lack of theoretical principle in the recommendations for curriculum practice. In developing this theory, CHAT has been an important theoretical framework for this study in developing the new theory presented here; this is an original approach to conceptualising the dissemination of literature to 11 – 16 year olds. Using CHAT has enabled a close examination of the object of the use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds and the impact of the various circles of community on that object. Particularly notable has been the way in which this study has built on extant theories of Boundary Objects to explain both teachers' feelings of a lack of professional autonomy and a *fuzziness* about definitions of quality which relate back to community demands. In terms of the object of the use of fiction in the classroom, the data from this study have indicated that unlike Yandell's (2012) conceptualisation of *doing a book* as a positive teaching and learning experience, the data here indicate that the lack of clarity in terms of the Boundary Object intersections has made *doing the book* a transactional, mechanistic process, rather than a positive teaching and learning interaction. In this sense the literary qualities of the book are of secondary importance to the value of the text as a Swiss army knife tool with a multitude of purposes. This also fits in a broader theoretical interpretation of fiction becoming schooled, which also leads to particular curriculum approaches.

The data from this research have indicated, interpreted through the lens of CHAT, that there is an institutional, professional and personal complexity to how fiction for 11 – 16 year olds is approached for both classroom and private use. It is time to look beyond the dictates of the curriculum and examination syllabuses and look again at how to theorise the use of fiction with 11 – 16 year olds; this study suggests new theoretical approaches. Conceptualising a pedagogy from this theory this would in turn support teachers of English who currently feel conflicted and confused as they try to address the many expectations of the various communities to which they are answerable.

In the next section I demonstrate that the concerns raised in the research reported here also resonate with a corpus of national and international research

literature interrogating the content, substance and delivery in an English literature curriculum.

5.7.2 Links to current research

The research reported here is a small scale research project. Nevertheless the analysis of the data through CHAT and in relation to theories of boundary objects has demonstrated that there are considerable issues relating to the choice, teaching and conceptualisation of literature in the curriculum at local and national level. As I noted above, the lack of a clear pedagogy to support the teaching and dissemination of literature is also problematic.

I have referred to the work of McLean Davies et al, (2013) and Locke (2008) in considering the appropriacy of curriculum iterations for literature in Australia and New Zealand in the twenty first century in a multicultural society. I have noted too how the debate has led to a loosening of the influence of the putative canon on the curriculum in these countries. A similar debate in this country (Goodwyn, 2008, 2012a, b; Cliff-Hodges, 2010a) about the purpose of literature in the curriculum has failed to influence policy; yet my research indicates that this is an issue long overdue for consideration. The need to encourage reading whole texts for pleasure is part of this and is again reflected in a body of current research literature (Westbrook, 2013; Beach et al, 2010).

The problems for both new and more experienced teachers in meeting external community demands, specifically identified here through the use of CHAT, have also been reported through other research projects. The pressures from different aspects of community noted here, showing that where students prioritised enjoyment in a text teachers were often target driven, substantiate findings from other recent research (Domaille, 2003; Richards-Kamal, 2008; Beach et al, 2010; and others). Similarly the findings reported here about lack of teacher autonomy and lack of clarity about the object of teaching fiction develop recent research themes too. Turvey and Yandell (2011) denote teachers as delivering the curriculum, supporting Goodwyn's (2012a) view of teaching the prescribed curriculum as *mechanistic*. Similarly Westbrook (2013) recounts the problem of the new young teacher unable to develop innovative practice in *isolation* where

isolation refers to her professional situation within a department and school unable or unwilling to develop together.

This study confirms the problems noted in research literature and, here, through the use of CHAT and boundary object theory, has identified the current complexity of using fiction with 11 – 16 year olds for both pleasure and in the classroom to meet curriculum specifications. What has also been demonstrated is the lack of a clearly articulated pedagogy to support the use of literature in schools. I consider the pedagogical implications of this in the next section.

5.7.3 Pedagogical implications

The evidence from the data discussed here and in line with other recent research is that increased prescription of fiction texts considered suitable for use with 11 – 16 year olds will ultimately have a deleterious effect on attitudes to reading and literature in general. Whilst Tickle (2013) is reporting on this very subject in T*he Guardian, a* newspaper recognised for its liberal stance, nevertheless the views she represents are from well qualified professionals in the field: a Professor of English Literature Robert Eaglestone; a Head of an English Department, Carol Atherton; a co- director of the English and Media Centre, Barbara Bleiman; and the president of the English Association, Adrian Barlow. Their over-weening concern is not just the reduction in access to current fiction for the age group but the impact this may have. They unanimously predict a potentially strong and damaging impact on the curriculum which might result from these proposed initiatives.

Referring specifically to developments in England, firstly Barlow suggests that there will be a confining of the teaching of English Literature in schools to top sets alone. This will be only partly because of the difficulty of the new challenges represented by the new curriculum proposed for England but also because new Academies are not bound by the curriculum but do want to achieve high results in league tables. Secondly Eaglestone sees that a reduction in the teaching time given to English Literature may well lead to a fall in the study of English Literature

at universities and Bleiman echoes this. The HoD, Carol Atherton is quoted saying ideas which resonate strongly with the teachers in this research:

> *…it's about a child's right to have contacts with worlds beyond their own. 'Without it, you will have children who will be disenfranchised from not just classic texts, but from more modern ones,' she says. 'Schools should be nurturing students' imaginative lives, and encouraging them to empathise with people whose lives are not like theirs.*

The term *high-quality* is again key, repeated twice in the identification of texts to be read in the curriculum for Reading for pupils at KS4 in the English education system. This is in contrast to the Australian curriculum (2011) for the same age group which does include lists of authors and texts but notes:

> *The following texts are examples of texts suitable for the study of Literature and are intended to stimulate thinking about teaching resources in relation to the content of the curriculum. The following examples are not meant to be prescriptive.* (p.6)

Unlike the English Curriculum, the Australian Curriculum places autonomy firmly back with the teacher by the inclusion of phrases referring to *stimulate thinking* and *not meant to be prescriptive.*

This study has revealed a pedagogical dilemma: is fiction for 11 – 16 year olds to be viewed as a means to an assessed educational end or should it be used to encourage more esoteric qualities such as a love of reading; an ability to respond to and critique literature in order to develop personal discrimination; or the ability to use literature as a means of understanding and empathising with the lives of others? It has not been possible to state categorically what represents quality in fiction for 11- 16 year olds but it is evident that we need to look with far more precision at how texts are used in class and what we want these young people to achieve by reading fiction.

There is certainly a need for teachers to know more about available books; this has been widely reported, but it is also time to reassess how a text should be approached and time to develop a new pedagogy to support this. This resonates with Cliff Hodges' (2010a) and Goodwyn's (2012a) view of the need to reignite

debate about the whole place of literature in the curriculum. In addition to approaches to text there is a pressing need to look again at the conflicting demands inherent in current iterations of curricula, and syllabi at all community levels in what 11 – 16 year olds need to learn from fiction; here pleasure cannot be disassociated from knowledge. This has implications for both teacher education but also professional development in order to keep teachers' interests in the potential of fiction for use with young people in and beyond the classroom alive and growing throughout their careers.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

I set out to investigate perceptions of quality in fiction for 11 - 16 year olds; inevitably an investigation into perceptions has raised many more questions than it answers. My starting point was my own professional and academic discomfort with the use of such a vague term as *quality* as a policy and curriculum descriptor of literary texts. This study has confirmed the vapid, nuanced and elusive nature of *quality* as a descriptor and has demonstrated that the use of *quality* in official and policy documents adds to rather than reduces professional conflict and confusion related to the teaching and dissemination of literature in schools in curriculum terms.

The study has also demonstrated professional tension and conflict in teachers who have a personal love of reading and literature and desire to pass this on to their pupils. However these same teachers feel trapped by both institutional and external expectations to assess and demonstrate improvement which leaves little opportunity for encouraging individual pupils to read for pleasure and personal growth.

With a New Curriculum for English already past the consultation stage and ready for implementation from September 2014, this study may not impact immediately on policy. However the findings reported here may add research weight to future consultations with professional bodies representing the views of teachers of English. This study adds to the weight of professional opinion and adds theoretical and pedagogical substance to the professional views.

In this Conclusion I will explore the location of this study in a theoretical context; the Implications for Policy (Curriculum; and Teacher Training) and the Implications for Practice (how the findings reported here may be translated into pedagogy). I will also explore the limitations of this study and in this context I will also describe the personal journey that this research represents in my own academic career.

6.2 Theoretical context for this study

In the Review of the Literature (Chapter 2) I explained that this study did not address Literary Theory per se. In the process of exploring and analysing the data it has become evident, however, that Literary Theory does impact on both curriculum iterations and on how teachers actually teach literature. Building on work by Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) and Goodwyn, (2012a) this study confirms that notions of Literary Theory prevalent within schools and, significantly, apparently behind curriculum developments have effectively become *schooled* and are still rooted in a Leavisite or Literary Heritage tradition. This is an important research based contribution to current debates about the appropriateness of new curriculum requirements.

Similarly there has been much written about how to teach fiction to 11 – 16 year olds and the need for 11 – 16 year olds to read for pleasure. However this study addresses a gap in the literature in that it indicates that choices about how to teach fiction are often practical choices linked to the need to fulfil stringent curriculum and examination requirements. This can also be seen as lack of clarity about the object in terms of CHAT. Whilst Yandell (2012) presents *doing the book* as a positive shared classroom experience this study indicates that *doing the book* can often be an expression of a transactional approach to the fiction text as a tool to achieve a range of learning objects. Yandell's study is a potential ideal; this study demonstrates that external pressures and lack of teacher autonomy can mean that the joy of discovering a literary text together can often be lost in the need to make teaching pragmatic. The study has also confirmed and built on other studies (Smethem and Day, 2009; Smulyan, 2003; Day, Fernandez et al, 2000; Beach et al, 2010; McLean Davies et al, 2013; Goodwyn, 2012a; Westbrook, 2013) in demonstrating that the need to conform to particular community expectations has led to a lack of teacher autonomy and tension. Teachers in the study really wanted their students to enjoy reading books but often lacked the professional independence to be innovative in choices and teaching approaches. Again CHAT has been significant in identifying this.

6.2.1 Originality

Attitudes to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds have not been explored through CHAT before. Applying this theoretical framework to analysing the data has highlighted the influences of the various communities described on the practice of individual teachers and, indeed, departments. In addition to this CHAT has allowed for the identification of the *fuzziness* of the boundary object intersections in relation to the place of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds and thus to the difficulty in agreeing definitions of *quality* in relation to that same fiction.

6.2.2 New contributions

This study presents new contributions to pedagogical theory relating to how approaches to Literary Theory are conceptualised in the curriculum and used to inform teaching. This leads to a theorisation *of doing the book* based on the need for teachers to respond pragmatically to community and curriculum demands. The development of boundary object theory presented here indicates lack of clarity about purposes for fiction in the classroom and links to feelings of disempowerment by the teachers. Presenting these theoretical findings through CHAT has allowed these new conceptualisations of established issues.

6.3 Implications for Policy

6.3.1 Curriculum Documents

As I was beginning to complete this conclusion, a prescient email arrived from the National Association of Teachers of English in the UK (NATE), from the Common English Forum. This Forum was reporting back views collated from a range of associations and professional bodies within the English educational system on the syllabus content and assessment changes proposed for the teaching of English Language and Literature KS4 in England. This Forum outlined conclusions from the consultations about the new iterations of the KS4 curriculum which resonate entirely independently with findings reported here in this

research. In a five point summary relating to the teaching of English Literature at KS4, three points relate directly to my research reported in this thesis:

> ***ENGLISH LITERATURE***
>
> *1. We believe that the Arnoldian and Leavisite terms in which Literature is defined are not appropriate to the 21st century, nor are they in line with the way in which the subject is viewed in the universities.*
>
> *2. The canon of texts for study seems Anglocentric. We would hope that Welsh, Irish, Scottish, American or Caribbean literature would be included. We would find such an omission incongruous in view of the inclusion of 'Seminal World Literature' at Key Stage 3.*
>
> *4. We are concerned in general about the prescriptiveness of the English Literature programme, and see no reason, for example, why the Romantic poets should be compulsorily studied. This inclusion seems somewhat arbitrary, in view of the wide range of poetry of all periods which is available.*

.

I have demonstrated the Leavisite approaches to literature in schools, noting possible reasons for this (Goodwyn, 1999; Sumara, 2008; Goodwyn, 2012a). The NC for English (2008) places emphasis on the literary and cultural heritage of texts. This continues into the draft curriculum proposed for 2014 which also continues the emphasis on heritage texts from pre 1914, with only one category referring to poetry and drama, not fiction, from post 1914 and one new, general category of *seminal world literature* (p.4).

I have already indicated in the Review of the Literature (Chapter 2) and in the Discussion (Chapter 5) that other national curricula iterations demonstrate the possibility of less restricting approaches to the teaching of literature. Here I refer again to the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011). In ACARA the notes on the teaching of literature do not refer simply to the teaching of the heritage aspect of literature but allow literature to be explored through:

> ..*the dynamic nature of literary interpretation and considers the insights texts offer, their literary conventions and aesthetic appeal.* (p.4)

Similarly, as I noted earlier, in the Australian curriculum the lists of texts (from a variety of cultures, countries and epochs) are merely starting points for discussion and not prescriptive. Indeed the ACARA rubric related to the teaching of literature is explicit about literary heritage and artistic value being, again, *changing and dynamic*. The prime consideration in choosing a work of literature for use with young people in the classroom being how the work has the potential to impact positively on the life and development of the young people who read it has:

> ..*personal, social, cultural and aesthetic value and potential for enriching students' scope of experience*. (p.4)

Whilst beyond the remits of the study described in this thesis, it is worth noting that ACARA does not limit a definition of literature to the written word alone and is also explicit about the acceptability of studying parts or extracts of text as appropriate to the learning task and the ability of the pupils.

The findings of this study give research weight to the professional views reported in the Common English Forum that it is time for policy makers to look beyond a Literary Heritage model of teaching English Literature as the accepted approach within schools and to encourage a more flexible approach to a view of what literature is. A consideration of the ACARA by policy makers and interested professional bodies in the UK might be a starting point. However any such development would have to be done in conjunction and simultaneously with Examination syllabuses, which, as this study has demonstrated, are also closely linked to a literary heritage, Leavisite model.

There is no doubt that the continued use of *quality* in policy and curriculum documents as an indicator of a particular type of literature will remain problematic. A revisiting and development of theories into the purpose and place of fiction in the teaching of English at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the UK would aid policy makers. This would support a reconceptualization of the pedagogy behind curriculum and broader syllabus development and the associated guidance for its enactment. It would be beneficial to look again at such a pedagogy before further developing

the aspects of the curriculum related to the teaching of literature, and fiction in particular.

As an increasing number of schools find themselves free of NC restraints as, for example, Free Schools or Academies, there is a real opportunity for some departments and teachers to apply innovative thinking to the place, the choice and the teaching of fiction to the 11 – 16 year olds in their institutions. Despite the fact that common national examinations are likely to continue to exist, a pedagogy to guide teachers on the use of fiction, its functions and its purposes, in the classroom would be invaluable to enable all teachers to move firmly forward from the prevalent literary heritage model.

That this study reflects more widespread concerns is also demonstrated in the findings of very recently published research by Sullivan and Brown (2013) who have shown that children who enjoy reading also perform better across the whole curriculum, including in mathematics. This is potentially theoretical evidence that time for developing11 – 16 year olds' private reading of fiction needs to regain a higher profile, again with a pedagogy to support the teachers who have already demonstrated in the data that they want their students to read for pleasure.

6.4 Teacher Training

6.4.1 Knowledge about literature for 11 – 16 year olds

The data show evidence that the teachers interviewed felt that they had been introduced to new ways of looking at and using fiction for 11 – 16 year olds in the classroom during their training, generally the PGCE year. I have already raised the issue identified by OFSTED (2003) that teachers are not well informed about fiction particularly for the 11 – 16 year old age group. There are two implications for the future which arise from this. Firstly it would appear that PGCE and other teacher training courses, particularly those based in school, should be encouraged to continue exposing trainee secondary English teachers to literature which will engage 11 – 16 year olds, particularly YAL. This encouragement would

be both general but also designed to foster a lasting interest in YAL in the teachers.

Such an interest would enable teachers entering the profession to know how to encourage a range of private reading amongst their pupils. Additionally confident interest and knowledge in YAL would be a means of fostering knowledge about texts which might enable new teachers to contribute fully to departmental discussions about purchase of sets of texts for use in class or individual copies for the library. This would not be in place of looking at more established texts but rather an extra strand of knowledge to enable teachers to begin a reading journey with their pupils which starts *where the pupils are* (Hall and Coles, 1999; Greenleaf, Hinchman, 2009) in their interests, abilities and enthusiasms

6.4.2 Approaches to use of text in schools

Addressing how to use texts in school with trainee teachers of English, in order to encourage approaches that are not just Literary Heritage is potentially more problematic. Goodwyn (1999) has demonstrated that trainee teachers are not encouraged to use solely literary heritage approaches to teaching literature during training in the UK. However he has also shown that both curriculum and examination requirements and practice in school militates against innovation by the new teacher. This need to conform to the community expectations and practices was amply illustrated in the findings of this study. The requirement to demonstrate measurable success was often seen to be prioritised over encouraging pleasure and enjoyment in the reading of fiction. Conforming to community expectations, in CHAT terms, is particularly important for new practitioners who are likely to revert to default community approaches for convenience and professional security. As Goodwyn has demonstrated, the default position is likely to be a model of teaching based on literary heritage principles.

Teacher training courses already alert trainee teachers to and engage them with new ways to teach and interact with text, particularly fiction; university based teacher training courses also inform their teaching with current research.

However change is more difficult to introduce long term when the literary heritage model predominates in the curriculum and in established, and apparently successful, institutional practices often uninformed or developed by current research. Goodwyn also notes how many teachers, once established as professional practitioners, revert to a model of teaching that they themselves experienced. This in itself become a vicious circle of practice. It is also a vicious circle that teacher trainers cannot change whilst school curricular and examination imperatives continue to be designed according to a literary heritage model. This study suggests a different theory.

As teacher training moves increasingly, under current government driven initiatives, into schools the situation described in this study is likely to be exacerbated. If new teachers are trained in communities whose practice is already constrained by compliant community objectives, then there is even less possibility of the development of new practice. This is likely to result in the continued *conservation of past pedagogies* (p.598) described by Goredetsky and Barak (2009). It is also likely to continue the trend of fragmenting literary texts to support related study of eg contextual grammar rather than reading the text for *immersion, engagement and reflection* (Goodwyn, 2012a, p.216).

The place of English literature in the curriculum remains undiscussed and along with it the reason for the prescribed texts in both curriculum iterations and examination syllabi, particularly in England. There is no rationale behind either selection of literary texts nor pedagogy based in principled research to support the teaching and dissemination of literature in school. This is equally true of literature from the canon or more recent literature aimed more particularly at a young audience, YAL.

In the context of the research reported here, CHAT, and in particular theories of boundary objects, demonstrate how practice may stultify within institutions under exigent external pressures. It has also been demonstrated that this has led to increasingly mechanistic approaches to teaching English literature within schools. In a climate where there is no rationale behind the curriculum for English literature, nor explicit pedagogy to support the teaching of it, teacher training

placed within the school community context is likely to lead to increasingly transactional, assessment and accountability driven classroom practice where the use of textual extracts rather than whole texts becomes the norm.

6.5 Implications for Practice

The initial purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of *quality* in relation to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds. Whilst the data showed how very difficult it was to define the concept of *quality* per se, nevertheless this small scale study has revealed a number of implications for practice in relation to the teaching of fiction to 11 – 16 year olds.

6.5.1 Tension and conflict

Using CHAT as a tool for analysis highlighted the lack of autonomy felt by teachers at an individual level in implementing the curriculum and that this related particularly to the teaching of fiction. Curriculum demands mean that even when focusing on a novel, teachers have to use the text to meet several learning and assessment objectives, not all of which will be linked to an engagement with literature. Teachers often felt a lack of autonomy in selecting fiction texts to teach and also how to use the same texts to fulfil curriculum learning expectations.

It seems important to raise awareness of the problems of fragmenting a novel so that students lose sight of the narrative. The novel needs to be central to any work associated with it and the novel itself viewed as a cultural artefact rather than simply a tool to mediate other learning objectives. Regrettably there is no easy fix for ameliorating the tension and conflict felt by teachers in relation to the teaching of fiction on when many of the issues causing this are more a result of what is perceived as an over full and over assessed curriculum.

There is clearly a place for a new pedagogy relating to the use of fiction in schools and perhaps a pedagogy which makes explicit distinctions between private and curriculum engagement with text, giving a place for both of these activities. This

needs to be reflected in policy documents and supported by a rationale rooted in principled research.

6.5.2 Private reading

This study highlighted that teachers view private reading and texts for class reading very differently. The study also demonstrated that in an ever more crowded curriculum, there is limited space for encouraging and nurturing private reading. Teachers of English have often chosen that career path because of their own love of literature and many, shown both in the interview and the questionnaire data, love reading themselves. The data showed that most English teachers did read widely but that for most there was often a disconnection between their own reading for pleasure and their classroom practice.

Several teachers reflected that they would like to spend more time talking about books with the students they taught and recommending texts to individuals. Whilst USSR/DEAR was a regular feature in some schools and some classrooms it seemed to have moved a long way from its original ideals, as I noted in the previous chapter. There is no doubt that providing timetabled opportunities for students to read books of their own choosing is potentially powerful. However this needs to be situated within a context where reading fiction is valued by the various layers of the community. LAC (2001) recommended that teachers across the school should identify themselves as readers in the school community and this is still a potentially powerful way of demonstrating that reading fiction is a valuable activity.

Allied to the provision of opportunities for students to undertake sustained reading of chosen works of fiction is the need to allow time for the discussion of favourite texts. The data from interviews with the students in this study have confirmed previous findings (Hopper, 2005; 2006) that 11- 16 year olds are most open to recommendations of books from their peers. Yet the data demonstrated that there currently appear to be few such opportunities given for such exchange of ideas about private reading in the classroom or even beyond it. Whilst the Library and

library lessons might be opportunities for discussing fiction, in practice attitudes expressed by both teachers and pupils about the school library are ambivalent.

From the findings in this study it would appear that the best situations are dependent on a close liaison between a member of the English department and the Librarian and also a Librarian who has a real interest in developing children's private reading in conjunction with the teachers. Circumstances which dictate that the library is a place where reading is assessed are not ideal.

The overweening impression is that what is needed to implement simple changes is a community prioritisation of the importance of reading as an activity that all can enjoy. In practice this is not easy to do. Curriculum pressures militate against the allowance of time for this and new initiatives have pushed LAC activities related to reading out. There are also budgetary constraints. Whilst activities such as shadowing the Carnegie Award occur, even these opportunities to discuss books centre around a short list selected by adults. Such activities may also be extra-curricular and involve selected pupils or those who already have an interest in reading. There is a need to provide more occasions when students can engage in a free discussion of books and their own reading. In practice it is hard to see how this can fit with the current curriculum.

6.5.3 Class texts

I have already identified that the choice and management of a class text can prove problematic. This links to the teacher's feeling of a lack of professional autonomy (Gorodetsky and Barak, 2009). Through the data I illustrated that often the school syllabus only requires one work of fiction to be taught in the course of a school year. At Key stage 4 this one text will often also be taught specifically for examination purposes. The teacher is further restricted both by the probable institutional restriction on which novels are available to which years; what learning objectives have been prescribed at departmental level to be met through this novel; and, indeed, limitations of stock in the stock cupboard. Regrettably budgetary restrictions are beyond the remit of this work, but it may be helpful for schools to consider looking beyond the old examination favourites to gradually

including the repertoire of available texts, even for examination. Encouraging all teachers to contribute to this debate is clearly the ideal.

Teachers also indicated in interviews their own desire to choose a text that would suit the majority of the students in the class. The dilemmas they reported that they faced in doing this were complex. They were keen to find a novel with subject matter that would interest the majority of the class. In making this choice they were very aware of attendant community pressures: they needed a text that would meet with parental and departmental approval; they also often mentioned a text that boys would enjoy. In this latter element the research that the teachers seemed most aware of was the need to engage boys, particularly with reading.

With so many conflicting demands involved in selecting and teaching a novel it is unsurprising that there can be a lack of focus on the novel itself. In the previous chapter I referred to the *doing* of the novel and the need for a pedagogy to help the teacher manage the conflicting demands. The fact that teachers are evidently willing to respond to findings from research, illustrated by their willingness to engage with motivating boys with reading, would make this practicable. There may be a need for professional bodies to support teachers in this with further accessible, research based articles on the effective teaching of fiction based on explicit pedagogical principles.

6.5.4 School canon

One aspect arising from the implications for Policy (Section 6.3) is the idea of the school canon. The NC for English at Key Stages 3 and 4 has an implicit school canon in the suggested and recommended texts and authors. This is firmly rooted in a model of literary heritage, the Leavisite tradition; this study suggests that neither the literary heritage model nor the notion of a school canon are helpful. This rigidity is perpetuated in the examination syllabi. Inevitably school stock cupboards reflect examination and curriculum imperatives; budget constraints means renewal of stock is often limited to essential texts required by the curriculum.

The current Secretary of State for Education in England, Michael Gove (2011b), has perpetuated this outdated notion of canon in his recent comments on what 11 – 16 year olds should read in Key Stages 3 and 4. YAL is the kind of *dynamic* development in fiction noted in ACARA. Curriculum iterations, which name particular authors of books for young people are only relevant at the time at which they are published, and do not allow for new developments in the field of YAL. The importance of the YAL genre of fiction for young people on many levels has been explored in this thesis; a *dynamic* curriculum needs to look to include YAL as a developing and changing aspect of literature appropriate for young people.

There is a paradox in including the school canon in this conclusion. Nevertheless it can be seen from both the Review of Literature (Chapter 2) and from the Discussion in the previous chapter that historic notions of *good literature* need to be reappraised. This is problematic. I refer back to Benton (2000) who explores the almost holy connotation of canon and the literature associated with it. Any positive move away from a literary heritage approach to the dissemination of literature in school implies an honest reappraisal of the whole concept of what may be termed the school canon, putting the needs of developing readers at the forefront. YAL as a genre would be a significant part of this. Above all any catalogue of books needs to be *dynamic* (ACARA, 2011) and *changing* and, in due course, will need to also encompass a range of textual modes.

6.5.5 Teacher knowledge of texts

Linked to the need for changes in perceptions of a School Canon is a recurrent theme of the need for teachers to have a greater knowledge of the fiction available for the 11 – 16 year old age group; this would include YAL. This implies providing more opportunities for discussion at the department level of community and valuing the reading of this literature. Again I refer to the data and previous sections in this study which indicate that teachers became familiar with a range of fiction texts, including YAL, during their teacher training. However the data illustrate that this full engagement with a range of texts does not continue; I refer to the fact that only as minority of teachers in the interview and questionnaire samples evinced active interest in books written for young people, beyond

reading expected for teaching purposes. This also has considerable implications for new models of school-based teacher training, as I noted in *6.4.2,* and for the teaching community too. I discuss the latter implications in the following section.

6.5.6 Implications for teachers

Just as this study has revealed considerable implications for teacher training, so there are also clear messages for the whole community of teachers of English at individual, department and institution level and to those who create and implement curriculum and examination policy beyond the schools.

I have already established the need for a debate about the purpose of using literature in the school curriculum. This is a debate which needs to be reignited not just at national level but also within individual schools and English departments. Reading for pleasure can be seen to improve overall educational attainment (Sullivan and Brown, 2013) and this could once again be embraced as a whole school issue, beyond the remit of just an English department.

Within English departments the research reported in this thesis has demonstrated the need to discuss and evaluate best practice in managing the teaching of literature, to clarify the object, or purpose, of the use of literature in the classroom. This research has also demonstrated the impact of assessment and curriculum pressures on teaching with literature and that this can lead to mechanistic approaches where fiction extracts can be used, for example, to merely demonstrate grammatical features and whole texts may not be studied.

In terms of CHAT and boundary objects, teachers need to be aware of the dangers of the fuzziness of boundary object intersections which may lead to the conservation of past pedagogies. Vocabulary is also important here, where a mechanistic attitude to fiction in the classroom may inadvertently be reinforced by reference to eg *doing* a book. Whilst curriculum and examination exigencies cannot be ignored, nevertheless departments can clarify their own aims in teaching literature and put in place their own pedagogies, even if none are clear within policy documents. It may also be time to challenge the prevalent literary heritage model of teaching literature and look again at YAL and the possibilities this offers.

By beginning to challenge the content of policy documents teachers of English may also be given the confidence to challenge demands of the broader community.

In making this challenge this research has demonstrated, through the lens of CHAT and boundary object theory, that teachers in the circles of community (Table 4.7) are relatively powerless. This is particularly true of the individual teacher in an increasingly accountable environment. In order to return some power to the teachers in how they approach the teaching of literature, not only is there a place for the renewed discussion at departmental level, noted above, but there is also a significant role for professional bodies, such as NATE. The professional bodies may in some way be able to counterbalance the negative impact of the other communities that I have demonstrated. This may be done by, for example, disseminating current research specifically about the place and teaching of literature in the curriculum and encouraging further debate at regional and national level about how literature is taught.

6.6 Limitations of this study

6.6.1 Overview of Limitations

This small scale empirical study was designed to investigate perceptions of quality in fiction through the views of teachers and young adults aged between 11 – 16 years old. The study was set within a school and curriculum context. Whilst the initial questionnaires were answered by teachers alone and drew on opinions across 18 institutions, the interviews took place between teachers and students within the same four institutions. The study was designed to investigate perceptions of quality in fiction that related to both the private reading of 11 – 16 year olds and the fiction used within the classroom for curriculum purposes.

6.6.2 Identification of Limitations

The study arose from my own professional experience as both teacher, teacher educator and parent. When I began the research for this study I had nearly 40

years of professional experience and over 30 years of parental responsibilities. From each of these perspectives I had become increasingly concerned about the way ideas relating to books 11 – 16 year olds read had become political, educational and social footballs. Everyone had an opinion about what 11 – 16 year olds should read; such opinions found voice in all arenas from political forums and documentation; through focussed educational requirements and discussion; through media reports; and through general private discussion and anecdote.

It was evident to me that this whole area was highly complex and that there were many layers of community and community opinion informing what might be a consensus view of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds. Consequently I made the decision to situate the research within the context of school communities but to consider the views of both teachers and the students in school. Originally I had intended to include parents' views too, but it quickly became evident that this would, at this stage, add considerable complexity to a research project which had already generated complex data. Therefore the samples chosen for interview were limited to teachers and students from 11 – 16 years old.

For the purposes of this study, I eventually chose to analyse students' and teachers' views together. In practice, however, whilst it was interesting to look at perceptions of quality from the perspective of two different subjects within a community, looking at both students' and teachers' perceptions of quality within the same study increased the complexity of the data. It might have given more clarity to the findings of this study consider one community at a time: either students or teachers.

6.6.3 Class use of fiction and private reading

Setting the study in a school context meant that I wanted to consider perceptions on what quality meant in relation to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds used in the classroom and recommended for private reading. It might have been more effective in terms of this study to look at the teaching of fiction in school separately from the engagements with reading as a private activity: uses are different and

not necessarily always compatible. However this study has pinpointed the problems in identifying the purposes of reading fiction arising from a school context.

I had conceptualised that there might be might be distinct differences in these perceptions. In reality both teachers and students saw fiction for use in class and for private reading as having two distinct roles which rarely intersected. This study has firmly established this bifurcation of perspective in relation to fiction for private reading and classroom use. However it would add to knowledge to repeat the study in a different context looking at perspectives of quality for in fiction for class use and private use separately. This would give weight and depth to the findings reported here. Within the time strictures of research within a school, this would then also allow more time to investigate one line of enquiry in more detail.

6.6.4 Awareness of my own role as researcher

The samples for both the initial questionnaires and the subsequent interviews were both convenience samples. At the time of the data collection I was a lecturer at a School of Education. The questionnaires were distributed to schools within the Partnership for the university within the South West of England, where I was known by name in my role as a member of the Secondary PGCE team and a trainer of English teachers.

The interviews were carried out in a convenience sample of schools which had volunteered, through the questionnaires, to participate in the study. I had a good relationship at English department level with each of the volunteering schools as a result of long association with the schools through visiting trainees in the school in my PGCE capacity as a University Visiting Tutor. I had also trained some of the teachers who volunteered to be interviewed for the study.

The participants were fully informed about the purpose and nature of the study (Appendices 6 and 7). However my prior relationship with both schools and some individual teachers meant that the interviews were conducted with a degree of professional familiarity and assumption of shared values (Kvale, 1996; Creswell,

2007) based on a prior relationship. My interest in YAL was known and my membership of the university, teacher educator, community may have implied a willingness to challenge government policy. This may have led to a degree of professional openness from the teachers where an interviewer unknown to them may have received more guarded responses. I did not know the students and my role or status would have been meaningless to them, so I may assume that their responses were unlikely to be unaffected by preconceptions related to my own professional persona or views.

I was continually aware of the need in a qualitative study such as this to be as true as possible to the data representing the voices of the participants. I immersed myself in the data – listening to recordings for hesitation, nuance and inflection; reading and rereading transcripts. Analysis through N-Vivo gave some distance and objectivity. As I wrote each section I returned to the database and used functions such as Query to double check my perceptions. Any qualitative analysis is ultimately subjective, however I believe I have represented the subject of this study honestly and ethically.

6.7 Implications for further research

This study has demonstrated, even through the small sample represented by this study, that the many and nuanced views of *quality* in relation to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds means that the use of the word quality as a descriptor, particularly in official and curriculum documentation is unhelpful.

I have indicated above that a refined version of this study could be repeated. I would refine it initially by separating out the elements of quality related to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds for use for teaching based activities and that recommended and encouraged for private reading. In addition I would develop the study along two parallel paths: that is, again as I have indicated above, by considering the views of the 11 – 16 year old students and the teachers discretely.

It is also evident from this study that views of *quality* are seen to be imposed on teachers by communities far removed from individual schools that is by government and policy makers. It is evident that a fully rounded interpretation of what quality means in the identified range of literature cannot be achieved without an in depth investigation of how members of government with influence over curriculum and the policy makers concerned with the conceptualising, the construction and the dissemination of curriculum matters related to the use of fiction in school interpret *quality.* A further strand of research related to this study, interrogating the views of members of these communities, would be valuable.

Furthermore, my experience in this study leads me to believe that any further interviews would be even more informative if they were undertaken by a researcher with a neutral professional stance, unlike my own position within this study.

As with much research, this study raises more questions than it answers. However the data also indicate that there is a considerable need to develop both institutional and policy clarity about what *quality* may mean in educational terms when applied to fiction for 11 – 16 year olds.

6.7.1 Educational use of fiction for 11 – 16 year olds

Beyond the possibilities of further research into how *quality i*s conceptualised by all communities contributing to both policy and classroom practice in relation to fiction for the 11 – 16 year old age group, a need has been demonstrated through the data for research into how fiction is used in an educational context: this applies to both curriculum use and private reading. This arises from the concept of *doing a book* which was identified as a common way of explaining how fiction was taught, but often led to a movement away from looking at complete text with at the chosen text as a complete literary artefact.

This proposed research could be conducted in two strands. Policy makers indicate the necessity and the extent of the required reading of fiction through

curriculum documents and, in a more focussed assessment based context, in examination syllabuses. The theoretical basis for this needs to be explored.

Within schools, the way in which fiction is used to fulfil the curriculum would be a valuable area for research. A key focus might be how a literary text is used as an artefact, somewhat divorced from its cultural reality, as a tool to illustrate and exemplify.

6.8 My research journey

This study marks the end of a long professional and personal journey. I recorded my own love of reading in Chapter 1 of this thesis. I also wrote how I have tried to share my own pleasure in books throughout my life - at a personal level with my own children and grandchildren; with all those I have had the privilege of teaching at a professional level. As a teacher I have seen a NC for English introduced, implemented and amended. I have been encouraged to see a framework and structure to inform English teaching and I have also worried about the potential for a stringent curriculum to become mechanistic and reduce choices. All these experiences contributed to my desire to research into perceptions of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds: it seemed to me that curriculum decisions regarding literature were often not rooted in overt educational theory or principled research.

This study has been long in the planning, execution and completion. I myself have moved from classroom teacher in school who took both policy and pedagogy at face value to, I hope, a more thoughtful and competent researcher now willing and more able to question the nuances of policy and pedagogy through the principles of educational research which I have learned. This study has been of huge professional and personal value. My engagement with these issues of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds informed my teaching of cohorts of PGCE students. It also allowed valuable dialogue with colleagues in school over a number of years. The research skills that I have learned have helped me to consider issues more thoughtfully, weighing both practical and research evidence

in academic decision making. Above all I have appreciated the responsibility a researcher has in qualitative research to be ethical, honourable and true to the data. It is the researcher's duty to give a voice to those who may not otherwise have one. At a personal level completing this thesis will complete my academic career now that I have retired.

I am no longer in a position to pass on my own research to a new generation of trainee teachers in the hopes of awakening their own academic curiosity and helping them in turn to plan their own teaching in the light of research and principled pedagogy. However I believe the findings from this study do have resonance for current teachers of English and in the next section I indicate how the findings of this study may be disseminated.

6.9 Dissemination

This study has indicated both the strong commitment of teachers of English but also the complex tensions they face in teaching 11 – 16 year olds both about literature and equally to love reading for pleasure. The study has also illustrated that some of the tensions arise from a curriculum which is not strongly underpinned by theory nor supported by a clearly articulated pedagogy. Dissemination of the findings from this study might contribute to the current debates about curriculum exemplified by the report from the Common English Forum. This dissemination might be most valuable in professional papers or journals since it represents the voices of practising teachers and the students they teach.

6.10 Summary

This research study set out to investigate perceptions of quality in fiction for 11 – 16 year olds through the eyes of teachers and students in schools. It arose from my own professional discomfort with the widespread and frequent use of *quality* as an undefined descriptor of literature in curriculum documents. I know that I

have raised more questions than I have answered as I stated at the start of this chapter; perhaps one expected inevitable outcome of a small scale qualitative study centred around investigating perceptions not facts. However in addition to contributing a principled work of research to an ongoing and passionate debate about what 11 – 16 year olds should read in school and at home, I hope that this study has also clarified various points. Despite the small scale nature of my study my findings resonate with wider debates and research and indeed add to these. In particular I would like to end by noting the following key elements of this study:

1. That *quality* is an elusive, subjective descriptor. It is not a helpful element of policy documentation, particularly that related to literature.
2. That current policies, curriculum imperatives and examination syllabuses militate to perpetuate literary heritage, Leavisite approaches to understanding literature. These approaches do not necessarily fit comfortably with developments in pedagogy and general literary theory. Nor do these approaches allow for new kinds of developing texts.
3. That teachers of English value literature and the contribution it can make to enhancing young people's lives and experiences.
4. That a knowledge of current YAL is invaluable to teachers of English as they seek to engage young people in reading at home and at school.
5. That teachers would like more time, resources and opportunities to support pleasure and enjoyment in reading fiction – at home and at school.
6. That most 11 – 16 year olds like to read and to be engaged by what they read.

I return to the title of this thesis: *Carrots or Maltesers, does it matter?* I began this work by explaining my own love of books and my reading history. My own ambition is, of course, to give young people access to the wonderful range of literature written in English (and other languages too!). In order to be able to willingly access literature, in book or other form, students need to have reading skills, but they also need to want to read. This study does not advocate a literary diet of *Maltesers*, but neither does it support a literary diet of carrots, particularly not the chopped up raw carrots representing some curriculum approaches to teaching challenging fiction. Rather there is a place for continuing to *start where the child is* (Hall and Coles, 1999) and for showing young people the wealth of

possibilities to be found in literature and to help them to develop their own literary judgements. Young people will choose both *Maltesers* and carrots in their own personal search for quality in a books and helping them to have confidence to voice their own opinions about books will impact on their future.

Ultimately I return to the students in the study. I failed to find a definition of quality which might serve to meet official criteria. Instead I offer this view by a 13 year old girl.

> *Basically, you are so lost in the book you can read anywhere, I mean I've read in the bath before, I've shut myself in the toilet before so I can read because if you get lost in the book and you lose track of time you are not aware of your surroundings you can't hear anybody else you are just in the book with the character thinking the same things seeing it from their perspective and seeing things through their eyes. I think I've read books where at night where I'd been sent to bed and I've picked up a book and read for three hours straight and it feels like ten minutes but I have finished a book.*

APPENDICES

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE STORY OF STORY

Picture the scene: a group of friends are gathered, perhaps around a table, perhaps around a fire. The venue may be almost anywhere: home, the pub, the great outdoors. The conversation and laughter flows. Then one member of the party leans in and says: 'Let me tell you a story; 'That reminds me of a story.'; 'I once heard something like that…'. We all know these openings and others like them. These words are also atavistic triggers: the human behaviour/response is always the same. A hush descends over the group. The storyteller-to-be immediately takes on the posture of the group leader and the rest shift, change their position into one of hushed expectancy: eyes fixed on the new storyteller, body posture one of intent listening. This is as true of the old as of the young, of the ignorant and the educated. The storyteller begins and uses strategies and cues to hold the audience: once upon a time; there was this…; the calculated pause for effect; the audience inclusion: you know… and an audience transfixed and expectant for the time it takes for the story to be told. The storytelling moment can last for the length of a story, seconds, minutes or can develop as links are made from one story to another and participants move from listener to storyteller – wearing the *narrator's mantle* (Holm, 2005).

It is also no coincidence that many therapies involve the construction of personal stories to help those distressed or traumatised make sense of personal history and indeed give genuine meaning to chaotic lives. Adopted or looked after children are encouraged to create personal narratives to help them discover a sense of stability, to enable them to root themselves in their own story. Elderly patients with beginning dementia (Journal Clinical Nursing, 2005) have been involved in storytelling projects. It is interesting to note that, as other communicative and reasoning faculties fade with such patients, story can be used as a prompt to reorder fractured memories using stories which equate with Erikson's (1982) stages of development. Stories carefully selected to move the participants through Erikson's developmental stages may help those with failing recall and fading sense of their own self and history to remember past experiences and emotions. From the story comes conversation and a

remembering of personal events, emotions and truths. Black (2008) reminds us that:

> *Storytelling helps participants cocreate and manifest their identities in relation to one another and also enables them to imagine and appreciate each other's perspectives*. (p.95 – 96)

This is particularly relevant for those perhaps losing a sense of identity but equally significant for those still in the discovery stages of who and what they are, linking strongly to Erikson. Similarly Black raises the issue of the double-anchoring of narrative through its existence as an account of facts in a current time about other times and places.

From this contemporary and innovative use of story as a therapeutic device and from a continuing human need for story, it is valuable to return to how story has developed in the narrative of human development. We have no means of knowing when the imagined gutteral vocalisations of our primitive ancestors became meaningful sounds but we can surmise. Were meaningful sounds preceded by some kind of sign language? Research has proved (Patterson, Linden, 1981) that higher order primates do indeed communicate through a range of expressions and gestures and, further, that they have the capability to communicate creatively and, that they are able to feel emo ion. A mother gorilla's grief at the death of her baby is a case in point. .In tribes, such as the aborigines, where we can still observe a wholly oral tradition we know that story is a significant cultural tool. In such societies story records history and there is a complexity of myths and legends to explain natural phenomena and, indeed, creation – the dreamtime. Beyond this, narrative also provides important verbal records of journeys, of food, of animals, of important skills a community needs to record and pass on. Framing vital information in narrative provides a framework for memory and hooks for remembering.

Our own interpretation of the early development of language is informed by story. We have cave paintings as a record of our ancestors' ability to draw vivid, strange to us, animals and events. Were these paintings a result of whiling away time or an attempt to capture important events for posterity or for others? Academic

analysis of language patterns has given us the Indo-European tree mapping the development of a large proportion of the world's languages and at the same time we read of the story of the Tower of Babel in the bible: a mythological presentation of this same historical development of language and an attempt to make sense of it through story.

The similarity of, for example, creation myths across cultures and indeed the prevalence of universal themes for stories (eg Propp and Booker) lead us towards a belief that storytelling has been ingrained in cultures since speech allowed oral messages to be transmitted from one to another. Stories inform, warn, entertain, share, titillate and perplex. They allow individuals to experience a range of emotions vicariously.

What began with an oral tradition, where stories might develop and change with each new telling and passing on, developed a new momentum when it became possible to record these stories. Initially the processes were laborious: carving into stone, scratching into rock, pressing into clay and allowing to harden, and the representational symbols often more pictures than letters. It is also evident that even from the start these records, the province of few, not only held the story but also acquired mystical and magical properties relating to their lack of general accessibility.

From stone (Rosetta Stone), to papyrus, to parchment, inexorably progress enabled more varied means of recording story but at the onset those able to make that record were few; those able to independently interpret the records fewer. There are undoubted magical qualities surrounding any kind of record (cave paintings; hieroglyphics, runes..) that one person creates and can be interpreted by only those with the skills to interpret signs. There are clear atavistic link to any kind of sorcery, witchcraft, oracle divination… where signs may be in animals' blood, or the fall of sticks, or the rising of smoke, or the shape of clouds in the sky, or the run of lines on a palm… except the power may even be seen as greater since the signs are both of mans' making and mans' interpretation. Knowledge is power.

We need to look at the labour intensive nature of early writing: how were the materials collected for the cave paintings? How many scribings on clay actually

remain? How long would it have taken to gouge out meaningful signs and symbols on rock or stone? We cannot answer these questions but it appears to be evident that none of these early ‘writings were quick or simple to accomplish. It would also seem clear that the creators of these scenes were craftsmen in their own right. Even until Medieval times picture was often used as part of religious ceremonies: the representation supported the spoken word and was not separate from it; elaborate frames were not used.

It is largely assumed that the use of papyrus as a form for recording is Egyptian in origin, probably dating back to around 3500 BC. Its use arose from natural materials readily available, much as the walls of caves and clay had provided convenient surfaces for recording initially. In colder climes the dried skin of animals, slain initially for consumption and warm fur, provided a similar material in the form of parchment. In Egypt the authorities saw the potential of papyrus and moved to control and limit production of papyrus.

In any society power and control are exercised in a variety of ways. Often fear of the unknown supports an authority and suppresses the people. It is easy to cite modern examples in any state, totalitarian or even (need to cite examples) otherwise. In a barely literate society those with the ability to create and interpret written symbols will be viewed with awe and will exert their own power.

It is probably no coincidence that in many cultures and civilisations the rise of religious power and literacy have been parallel developments. *In the beginning was the word and the word was with god and the word was god. (John1 1-5).* Collins and Blot (2003) identify the correlation between literacy practices and power observable throughout civilisation and they also make the contingent observation that this power is often vested in individuals or institutions backed by religion. In westerns civilisation we note how literacy was the province of the Christian church, both as keeper and later disseminator and educator. We see this in, for example, the Domesday Book and the Bayeux Tapestry, both records of everyday life and stories in their own right. Carefully and beautifully written manuscripts were seen to contain the knowledge and power and their perceivable value enhanced by the exquisite illuminations with which they were adorned. It is

unclear whether all the early copyists were also able to read what they copied the spread of literacy was closely controlled and socially hierarchical – another means of control.

Yet, as the skills of literacy percolated from the religious communities to the aristocracy, there was ambivalence to the value of reading as a social skill. It was the women rather or the older men who learned to read; books were not yet the domain of the young and fit. It is appropriate to cite the example of Alfred the Great's reading lessons again to support this. It is also significant that the acquisition of this accomplishment has been handed down the generations in story form.

Whilst the production of the written word was a laborious, time - consuming and painstaking process there had to be a purpose for its production. Apart from the word of God, the key recording was pragmatic prose: dates, history, possessions (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Domesday Book), and sermons. One might be tempted to summarise purpose as facts and morality. We note that that the Bible, a central and iconic text in western culture, largely comprises moral teaching through the medium of both history and story. Within the stories of the Bible even within this eclectic compilation we glimpse references to early recording: the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed, Paul's Epistles.

However, alongside this, extant records of stories, which will undoubtedly have begun as oral narrative, begin to appear recorded in manuscript by unknown scribes; we do not know why these works were committed to writing or on whose behalf. What we have is narrative of extraordinary power and beauty: for example *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer*. The former has its roots in pagan stories of gods and monsters whereas *The Wanderer* has themes resonating with Christian morality and values. And the extant manuscripts are not all poetical, religious or elegiac. *The Exeter Book* includes earthy riddles, which speak to everyman. There is evidence of a desire to communicate and to capture ideas. A desire to entertain and amuse the audience also appear to form part of the author's intent and craft. It is this desire to entertain and amuse yet also to inform and instruct an audience that is the background to the main thesis.

It is undeniable that the invention of the printing press by Johannes Guttenberg in 1440 was as transformational in its day, in western society, as the internet has been in the twenty first century. The leap from scribing to printing not only enabled greater circulation of written material but also began a move towards some standardisation of written language forms. Printed Bibles became visible in every church; and their intimidating size added to the mystery of their contents. These Bibles were frequently bound and padlocked, appearances, which reinforced the idea of forbidden secrets and magic and certainly did not invite universal scrutiny. Whilst universal literacy was still a long way off printed conventions were being established and text was able to be shared, transported and saved.

At an early point in History such devices as Horn books and Primers became a means of sharing the mystery of letters with children Hunt (1997). Records show the existence of these artefacts from the mid fifteenth century (Trobe), and their precursors, the alphabet tablets, even earlier. A horn primer was originally a paddle of horn, which could be worn at the waist with letters or simple sentences glued to it ever present for learning or reflection. Is this so different from the omnipresence of electronic devices such as mobile phones? This in its turn developed further to become a more substantial horn primer, or small book. Primer originally referred to a book containing prayers to the Virgin Mary and the religious connotations remind us of the links between literacy and the mystery of religion where priests and officials of religion, across faiths and cultures, were the first to adopt and develop skills of reading and writing. The canonical aspect of literacy has also continued to the present day and has percolated into modern education and curriculum iterations.

Early primers would have had sheets of alphabet letters followed by biblically based sentences or texts of increasing difficulty. Goggin (2009) also cites that needlework samplers not only enabled girls to learn the skills and complexity of needlework but also to learn letters and writing as they completed samplers. Indeed there is some evidence (Goggin) that this activity was not just a copying of, often religious, texts but also provided some opportunity for original composition of verses in this medium as expertise increased. When we consider the current debates of multimodality and story, it is worth recalling that this is actually not a modern concept at all.

Story for the ordinary man, woman or child in Medieval Europe and England remained a largely communal and mainly oral activity. Church services supplied Bible readings and access to religious stories, with sermons offering a view of Heaven and Hell. Good ways of living were exemplified by the lives of the saints and the consequences of bad living were even more graphically illustrated through brutal reality, allegory and parable We see evidence of this in The Canterbury Tales where *The Pardoners Tale* is a tour de force morality tale told with highly efficient preaching vigour yet ironically counter pointed against the Pardoner's revelations of his own personal veniality. He has the garb and trappings of a religious man yet lacks any true sense of morality himself. As a narrative device this tale is also a sophisticated tale within a tale within a larger tale and has very clear intertextual links. Reminding us that complexity of narrative also has ancient roots and assuming an audience able to interpret layers of meaning.

It is evident that storytelling may well have continued to be a significant form of entertainment for all social classes if we consider the entire opus of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, which is predicated on the premise that telling stories passes the time and can often be instructional as well as entertaining. In addition popular stories were told through drama: here we can look at the Mystery plays and the documented popularity of travelling players as some evidence of this. This tradition is seen in the history of theatres such as Shakespeare's Globe, where high and low born alike attended the same performances and were equally catered for by the scriptwriter/ drama creator who understood the gamut of literary and narrative interests of the whole audience. Shakespeare himself was a reteller of ancient plots and stories, illustrating a continuity from earlier times. This is true of almost all his plays: *Troilus and Cressida (a* link back to Chaucer here*)*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Othello*, the history plays…

Education at this time was largely in the classics and formally for boys of middle class and upper class parents. Daughters of wealthy families might be educated at home but were more likely to learn household skills than receive a classical education. Unusually Elizabeth 1 was highly educated by tutors but this was not the norm. The Paston letters (1422 – 1509) give a fascinating insight into

emergent literacy in one family, including both men and women, as the family rose from peasant to aristocratic status during a period of two hundred years.

Jane Austen explicitly records in her own novels some disparity between the literary interests of men and women. In so doing she gives us a contemporary insight into literary tastes and assumptions. Indeed Northanger *Abbey* is itself a pastiche of the Gothic novel and its plot a debate between romance, in its broadest sense, and reason. She draws for us a society where women read frivolous, and often morally questionable, texts whereas men are concerned with facts and day to day details. Jane Austen herself seems to be ambivalent about what constitutes real literary quality: it is the female villains who are obsessed with Gothic literature whilst her heroine, Catherine Morland, leaves these novels behind her as she moves to the reality of love of her own and domesticity. Later there are echoes of this in Dickens' Gradgrind's obsession with *facts, facts, facts*. Yet fiction continues to be a recognised route for escape for women. Even the genre titles: Aga Sagas, Chick Lit, Mills and Boon immediately conjure up a female audience.

In the days before universal education religious texts continued to play a significant part in the literary experiences of the poor. Sunday Schools, and later Ragged Schools provided some rudimentary education for the lower classes. Certainly in Sunday Schools the Bible Study was a significant aspect of the tuition. With the increased availability of books families, or individuals, might acquire a Bible. The large Family Bible may have been the sole book in many households and was not just access to religions stories but also often became a record for the family, carrying on its inner covers a record of births, marriages and deaths in the family. The legend of Mary Jones and her 25 mile barefoot walk to buy her own bible Welsh language after 6 years of saving hard for it, is used to illustrate the desirability of owning a Bible but may well represent, equally, the desire to possess a book. This is not insignificant. Sunday Schools themselves became gatekeepers for literature. The Sunday School prize was often a book, but a very moral and improving book with a strong Christian message underlying the narrative.

The socio-ethnographical history of valuing books is in the Western world is, then, significant. The possibility of universal education for all has only really existed in

England since 1870 and been compulsory since 1876; in many countries it is still not in place and an oral tradition will, of necessity, prevail. There have always been examples of children's books, such as the hornbooks and primers mentioned above. Whilst not universally available, books began to appear – Hunt etc) in the 1700s. The majority of these books had a strong moral tone, possibly linked to a Puritanical ethos. It is interesting to consider how Perrault's version of Red Riding Hood in has made Little Red Riding Hood a meek, compliant victim as opposed to the resourceful and wily little girl of the oral tale who outwits the wolf and lives (Zipes, 1993) The message is clear: disobedience leads to horrible punishment. This is a recurrent theme in books especially in those written specifically for young people. In America there was a notion, again based in a puritan ethos, a notion that any kind of fiction, moral or otherwise, was less suitable for children who ought to read non-fiction (Hunt, 1996). Later on we will consider how modern texts for children are constructed to inform and improve

In Victorian times children's books were again frequently moral tales, often with a very harsh outcome. A definite means of education and guidance. I remember a tragic story, given to my grandmother as a Sunday School prize, in the early 1880s. The girl's mother died and a stepmother entered the home. The girl died cold and alone having been cast out by her stepmother because: *she took the bread out of her brothers' mouths*. The line still haunts me! This was also an era when cheaper texts were available for the poorer classes. Penny dreadfuls, or bloods, were precursors to comics and had bloodthirsty, gristly, adventurous or even romantic themes. The name indicates the accessible price and sometimes groups would club together to buy these weekly publications. They had an intended audience of the barely literate since they were boldly illustrated and limited in text. Indeed the audience soon came to be predominantly young men or teenagers. Early Teen literature and additionally a literary form actively chosen and sought after by this age group. The educated of the time looked down on these publications but Chesterton (1901) defended them noting that they were on *the side of life*. Chesterton also equated the fantasy world of *Alice in Wonderland* to the unreality of penny dreadfuls and wondered why *Alice* had been caught and condemned to be part of a classic tradition, educating rather than purely entertaining.

The Edwardian period through to the early 1950s was a golden era for children's books but also for the development of mass publishing. The model of dime novels and yellow backs of the nineteenth century as cheap and disposable literature was developed by publishing houses such as Penguin. School stories became a popular genre for children. These were often removed from reality for most readers and also sharply divided along gender lines. There were stories of jolly girls' boarding schools for girls (*The Chalet School* series; *Malory Towers*; or novels by Angela Brazil) and stories embracing bullying and survival of the fittest for boys (*Billy Bunter, Jennings*). Annuals, hardback editions containing stories from comics, were also popular. Penguin astutely embraced the new child and adolescent readership by producing first the Puffin series for children and later the Peacock series for teenagers. Interestingly enough the titles in the Peacock series seem more aimed at a female than a male readership. Now Young Adult Literature is an expanding genre with specific shelves devoted to it in bookshops.

Whilst children's books have been in existence since books, and indeed written material, have been available we have entered an era where print is cheap and disposable; nor is it any longer covetable because other media has replaced it as a prime form of entertainment. We are also moving out of an epoch where books are a status symbol representing both education (the sets of Encylopaedia Britannica in their own handsome bookcases) or wealth (coffee table books, shelves of matching sets) and into an era where the written word is subordinate to recorded sound and images. Ironically we are also in an era where there has never been more reading material available aimed at specific groups of children by age, gender or interest. In any search for the meaning of quality specifically applied to children's literature we need to remain mindful of whence written story has come. A need for story is primeval and atavistic. The satisfaction from story can be solitary or shared. We have established the atavistic longing for story and noted the growth of the availability of text. As far as books for children and young people are concerned it is also evident that there can be many layers of purpose and use. Yet extrinsic and intrinsic to human, and therefore a child's appreciation of story, is the recognition that story can be of magic, a learning tool, a moral imperative. It has the potential to aid development in school and beyond it and also to provide a lifelong source of pleasure.

APPENDIX 2: INITIAL LETTER WITH QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Fiction Reading Questionnaire

I am a tutor on the secondary PGCE English course at the School of Education, University of Exeter. My PhD research project is focused on discovering what is understood by the term *quality* when used in relation to the reading choices of young adults aged between 11 and 16. *Quality* is a word which is used in general conversation and in policy documents relating to the reading of young people. However definition of the word appears more elusive.

I believe that by clarifying what is understood by *quality* in relation to the fiction reading of young adults, it may be possible to gain insight into aspects of that fiction which are considered important. I hope that a clarification of quality will emerge that will support fiction reading choices and recommendations for the 11 – 16 age group.

I would be very grateful if members of your English Department could complete these questionnaires and return them to me in the enclosed Freepost envelope. I am happy to provide further copies for completion either by post or electronically.

If you have any further questions or are interested in further participation please do contact me at:

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With thanks

Rosemary Hopper

February 2011

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS

Student Fiction Reading Questionnaire

I am a tutor on the secondary PGCE English course at the School of Education, University of Exeter. My PhD research project is focused on discovering what is understood by the term *quality* when used in relation to the fiction reading choices of young adults aged between 11 and 16. *Quality* is a word which is used in general conversation and in policy documents relating to the reading of young people. However definition of the word appears more elusive.

This questionnaire seeks to discover the professional views of practising English teachers on what their students read and what they consider appropriate and relevant fiction reading for their students. I am also interested in what teachers choose to read themselves and what informs personal reading choices.

The questionnaire is intended to be anonymous. However I am interested in interviewing teachers in more detail later in the project. Your contribution would be most valuable if you would be willing to take part in this next stage of the research. Please fill in the contact details at the bottom of the questionnaire if you would like to take part

A) Background information

1) Gender Male □ Female □

2) Teaching experience 0-5 yrs □ 6-10yrs □ 11-15yrs □ 15-20yrs □ 20+yrs □

3) Professional role (eg HoD, class teacher, SEN specialist …)_____

4) Year Groups taught (current school) Please tick the appropriate boxes

Year 7 ☐

Year 8 ☐

Year 9 ☐

Year 10 ☐

Year 11 ☐

5) School type (current school)

Please describe your school (eg state funded, independent; community school, church school, selective, comprehensive, specialist college ……)
_____

_____
_____

6) What is your degree subject? _____

B) Student reading

What do you look for in a book for your students to read?

……
……
……
……

List books you would recommend for your students to read at KS3. For each text you list your reason(s) for recommending it

Texts to read in class:

Text	Reason for recommending

Texts for independent reading:

Text	Reason for recommending

List books you would recommend for your students to read at KS4. For each text you list your reason(s) for recommending it

Texts to read in class:

Text	Reason for recommending

Texts for independent reading:

Text	Reason for recommending

How would you define the term *quality* in relation to books written for students at KS3 and KS4?

……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……

I am also interested in your own reading choices.

C) Your reading

List 3 books you have enjoyed recently:

1……

2.……**3.**……
……
……

What makes you choose a book to read?

……
……

……
……

I would be willing to participate in an interview about Student Fiction Reading. Yes/ No

Contact details if you are willing to be interviewed:

Name:

E-mail address:

Phone number:

Address:

This questionnaire is also available electronically if you prefer to complete it that way. Pl*ease* contact me at r.hopper@ex.ac.uk for an electronic version.

Thank you for completing this. Please return this questionnaire to Rosemary Hopper using the enclosed envelope.

APPENDIX.4: COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

Student Fiction Reading Questionnaire

I am a tutor on the secondary PGCE English course at the School of Education, University of Exeter. My PhD research project is focused on discovering what is understood by the term *quality* when used in relation to the reading choices of young adults aged between 11 and 16. *Quality* is a word which is used in general conversation and in policy documents relating to the reading of young people. However definition of the word appears more elusive.

This questionnaire seeks to discover the professional views of practising English teachers on what their students read and what they consider appropriate and relevant fiction reading for their students. I am also interested in what teachers choose to read themselves and what informs personal reading choices.

The questionnaire is intended to be anonymous. However I am interested in interviewing teachers in more detail later in the project. Your contribution would be most valuable if you would be willing to take part in this next stage of the research. Please fill in the contact details at the bottom of the questionnaire if you are interested in participating further.

A) Background information

1) Gender Male □ Female ✓□

2) Teaching experience 0-5 yrs ✓□ 6-10yrs □ 11-15yrs □ 15-20yrs □ 20+yrs □

3) Professional role (eg Head of Department, class teacher, SEN specialist …)_class teacher

4) Year Groups taught (current school) Please tick the appropriate boxes

Year 7 ✓ ☐

Year 8 ✓ ☐

Year 9 ✓ ☐

Year 10 ✓ ☐

Year 11 ✓ ☐

5) School type (current school)

Please describe your school (eg state funded, independent; community school, church school, selective, comprehensive, specialist college ……) state funded comprehensive

6) What is your degree subject? English

B) Student reading

What do you look for in a book for your students to read?

Quality of language – i.e. well written, engaging plot which will appeal to girls and boys alike.

List books you would recommend for your students to read at KS3. For each text you list, give your reason(s) for recommending it.

Texts to read in class:

Text	Reason for recommending
Shadows – Tim Bowler	Full of excitement plot wise but also lots of issues tackled: friendship, money, abuse, teen pregnancy etc.
Stone Cold – Robert Swindells	Plot is always a winner with Y9s – serial killer, girlfriend, running away from home, step parents. Interesting technically due to dual narrative, lots opportunity for dramatic irony exploration.
Holes - Sachar	Magic realism seems to appeal, plots, sub-plots, excellent characters all round.

Texts for independent reading:

Text	Reason for recommending
How We Met	For more mature Y9s, tackles teen issues
Malorie Blackman – most	For more mature Y9s, tackles serious issues
Darran Shan books	Exciting and lots of them

List books you would recommend for your students to read at KS4. For each text you list, give your reason(s) for recommending it.

Texts to read in class:

Text	Reason for recommending
Mice and Men	Easy, plenty of scope for really exploring characters, structure etc – particularly bridge set GCSE. So accessible.
Mocking Bird	Beautiful story, characterization, historical background etc. – for more able
Hound of the Baskervilles	Rollicking good read

Texts for independent reading:

Text	Reason for recommending
Honestly, am totally out of the loop – would have to research before I could answer.	

How would you define the term *quality* in relation to books written for students at KS3 and KS4?

Books that don't patronise, but deal with serious topics in appropriate depth, or that have quality of comedy or beauty – something that will move a student in some way and possibly surprise/challenge their preconceptions. Language that is accessible but will still stretch.

I am also interested in your own reading choices.

C) Your reading

List 3 books you have enjoyed recently:

1.Tractors in Ukraine

2..The Gateway to the Stairs – Lorrie Moore

3. The Corrections - Franzen

4. On Chesil Beach

What makes you choose a book to read?

Depends entirely on my mood, what's going on. Often if work is hectic and I'm worn out, just want something easy and feel good (but not crappy). Since having babies, I shy away from scary, thriller, death related topics and always want to know if it ends reasonably happily! In holidays, I want something more meaty and longer with more depth. I'm always drawn to human relationship/ condition of life type novels (Tom Woolf, Franzen, Roth, McEwan) and love the minutia of life stuff that McEwan does so brilliantly.

I would be willing to participate in an interview about Student Fiction Reading. Yes/ No

APPENDIX 5: PILOT TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SECTION A: BACKGROUND

- How long have you been teaching?
- Tell me about the kind of books you enjoy reading
- *Have you read any books for teenagers recently?*

SECTION B: TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TO TEENAGE BOOKS

Interviewer to pick up on specific books mentioned in question above, and encourage discussion about the books, themes, characters etc.

- Tell me about xxx which you've read recently.
- Why did you choose to read them?

Probe for: recommendations from friends; professional sources; publicity etc

- What are you looking for in a good book for a teenager?

Probe for: Narrative; Structure; language style; and theme (issues).

- What would you consider to be a bad book*?*

Probe for narrative structure, theme, language…

Tell me about the books which you found most enjoyable .

- Have you read any books for teenagers which you dislike, or which you feel are inappropriate for teenagers?
- What do you define as teenage fiction

Probe for authors, genre, themes…

SECTION C: TEACHER'S APPROACHES TO USING TEENAGE LITERATURE IN SCHOOL

- Tell me about books you are teaching at the moment (or propose to teach).
- What influences you in selecting a book to use in class?
- Can you think of two books which would offer different levels of challenge as a class reader?

Probe for descriptions of why one book is more challenging than another; probe issues, writing style, narrative structure

- How do you approach a class reader as you prepare to teach it?

Probe for: ways of reading; types of task; other related books.

- Do you ever use any other classroom approaches to reading fiction, other than the class reader?

This will get at other forms of reading such as group readers; book boxes; reviewing groups etc.

SECTION D: HOW TEACHER ENCOURAGES PRIVATE READING

- What opportunities are there for private reading in school?

Probe for regular library lessons; regular timetabled reading sessions; extra-curricular opportunities

How do you encourage private reading in children?

Probe for teacher/peer recommendations; books available to borrow; opportunities to share reading enjoyment

How would you describe progression in individual reading?

Probe for reasons which constitute the judgements underpinning progression

SECTION E: DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY

How would you define the notion of quality in books for teenagers?

Probe for: narrative, style, issues; tie in with Section B – What are you looking for?

Possible titles which fit the criteria

APPENDIX 6: TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Have Questionnaire to hand and refer to it

SECTION A: BACKGROUND

- You mentioned on the questionnaire that you have been teaching…years? How much change has there been in the books (novels) you use in school?
- *Prompt: How do you explain this?*

What about the books your pupils read for pleasure?

- *Probe for: How have these choices changed?*
- *Probe for reasons: Why do you think this is?*

SECTION B: TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TO TEENAGE BOOKS

Interviewer to pick up on specific books mentioned in questionnaire as suitable for class and private reading at KS3 and KS4.

In the Questionnaire (Part B) You mentioned that you look for the following …. …. (points from Questionnaire) in books for your students. Can you explain this more fully?

- *Prompt* : *In relation to Class book*
- *Prompt*: *In relation to Independent reading*

Tell me about the books written for a teenage audience which you found most enjoyable?

- *Probe for reasons for enjoyment*
- *Probe for: Narrative; Structure; language style; and theme (issues).*
- *Probe for how often read teenage fiction*

What would you consider to be an inappropriate book for teenagers*?*

Probe for narrative structure, theme, language…

Probe for titles, what makes them inappropriate: plot, issues, language, probe for examples

What do you define as teenage or Young Adult fiction?

- *Probe for authors, genre, themes…*

How do you find out about books written for teenagers (KS3/4)?

- *Probe for: recommendations from friends; professional sources; publicity etc*

SECTION C: TEACHER'S APPROACHES TO USING TEENAGE FICTION IN SCHOOL

How important is it to offer children opportunities to share fiction reading experiences in school?

Can you think of two books which would offer different levels of challenge as a class text?

Probe for descriptions of why one book is more challenging than another; probe issues, writing style, narrative structure

What other classroom approaches to reading fiction have you used, other than the class reader?

- *This will get at other forms of reading such as group readers; book boxes; reviewing groups etc.*

What is the difference between books used at KS 3 and KS4?

- *Prompt: What informs these choices (look for examination, progression)*

SECTION D: HOW TEACHER ENCOURAGES PRIVATE READING

What opportunities are there for private reading in school?

Probe for regular library lessons; regular timetabled reading sessions; extra-curricular opportunities

How do you encourage children to continue reading independently?

Probe for teacher/peer recommendations; books available to borrow; opportunities to share reading enjoyment

- *Probe for importance*

How would you describe progression in individual reading?

Probe for reasons which constitute the judgments underpinning progression

SECTION E: DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY

In the questionnaire you defined the notion of quality in books for students at KS3/4 as……...? Can you explain these points in more detail?

Probe for: narrative, style, issues; tie in with Section B – What are you looking for?

Possible titles which fit the criteria

APPENDIX 7: STUDENT CONSENT LETTER

University of Exeter
College of Social Sciences and International Studies
Graduate School of Education
St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter
Devon
EX1 2LU

My name is Rosemary Hopper. I teach in the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. My main role is teaching secondary PGCE trainees to become teachers of English.

I am interested in children's literature. I am currently researching for a PhD. My research focuses on the interpretation of quality when applied to fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds). Quality is a term often used by adults in relation to children's reading; however what is meant by this is not always clear. I hope to be able to explain more clearly what everyone means by quality when we are talking about books for people of your age.

The title of my research is: Maltesers or carrots: What is quality in fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds)? I would like to know what you think is quality in the fiction books you read. You will probably all have very different ideas. If you agree to be part of my research I would like to arrange to visit you in January 2011 and interview you for approximately 50 minutes. I will arrange a convenient time with your teachers.

The interview will be recorded. The recording will be transcribed and I will send you the transcription to look at. You and your school will be given a pseudonym or number so that the transcription will not be identified with you.Everything you tell me will be treated in confidence and you may tell me at any point that you wish to stop being part of my research project.

If you are willing to help me with my research please sign below. Please ask your parent/ guardian or carer to sign as well to say they are happy for you to help with the research as well.

……
……

I would like to take part in the research project *Maltesers or carrots: What is quality in fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds)*?

Name…….
Signed……

I agree that ……..(Name of child) may take part in this research

Name……. … (Parent/ Guardian/ Carer)

Signed ……

Date……..

APPENDIX 8: TEACHER CONSENT LETTER

University of Exeter

College of Social Sciences and International Studies

Graduate School of Education

St Luke's Campus

Heavitree Road

Exeter

Devon

EX1 2LU

My name is Rosemary Hopper. I teach in the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. My main role is teaching secondary PGCE trainees to become teachers of English.

My own research interests lie in children's literature. I am currently researching for a PhD. My research focuses on the interpretation of quality when applied to fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds). Quality is a term often used by adults and policy makers in relation to children's reading; however what is meant by this remains unclear.

The aims of my research are to add clarity to what is understood by quality in fiction. In so doing I hope to provide information which will support both young adults and those who care for them and educate them in making reading choices.

The title of my research is: Maltesers or carrots: What is quality in fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds)? I would like to know what you think is quality in the books for Young Adults from 11 –m 16 years of age. I anticipate that there will be very different ideas about this. If you agree to be part of my research I would like to arrange to visit you and interview you for approximately 30 minutes. Within the limitations of my diary I am happy to agree to the time that you suggest whether this is before, after or during school hours.

The interview will be recorded. The recording will be transcribed and I will send you the transcription to look at. You and your school will be given a pseudonym or number so that the transcription will not be identified with you. Everything you tell me will be treated in confidence. You may tell me at any point that you wish to stop being part of my research project.

If you are willing to help me with my research please sign below.

……
……

I would like to take part in the research project *Maltesers or carrots: What is quality in fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds)*?

Name…….
Signed……

Date……..

APPENDIX 9: DIAMOND NINE CARDS

A good novel would be about current issues to do with teenagers	A good novel would have characters teenagers can relate to
A good novel would be written in a way that is easy to understand	A good novel would make me think while I was reading it and after I had finished
A good novel would have a complicated plot	A good novel would be equally suitable for boys and girls
A good novel would have a happy ending	A good novel would be part of a series on the same theme or with the same characters
A good novel would be related to film and television series	DIAMOND NINE CARDS

APPENDIX 10: ETHICAL APPROVAL

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH

Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/ and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter)**. DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Rosemary Hopper

Your student no: 009690494

Return address for this certificate: GSE, St Luke's Campus

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD

Project Supervisor(s): Ros Fisher

Your email address: r.hopper@ex.ac.uk

Tel: 01392 724964

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:……...Date: 30 September 2010……...

.

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 009690494

Title of your project: ***What is quality in fiction for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds)*****?**

Brief description of your research project:

The research project is an investigation into the meaning of quality when applied to fiction read by young people from 11- 16. It aims to

A sample of children between 11 and 16 will be given questionnaires to complete. These will be anonymous but will ask for details of age and gender.
A sample of teachers will be given questionnaires to complete. These will be anonymous but will ask for details of gender and teaching experience.
It is then proposed to carry out interviews with groups of children between 11 and 16 in 3 or 4 focus schools in the South West of England. Teachers and parents from the same schools will also be interviewed in order to develop themes about quality emerging from initial questionnaires.
It is hoped to send questionnaires to authors of Young Adult literature and to interrogate documentation relating to the study of fiction in the curriculum produced by policy makers. The outcomes of the research will support teachers and policy makers in understanding how and why they are choosing books of fiction to use in the teaching of English. My research will support understanding of progression in the reading of fiction The aims of my research are to add clarity to what is understood by quality in fiction. Through the research I hope to provide information which will support both young adults and those who care for them and educate them in making reading choices.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Teachers of children from 11 - 16, parents of children from 11 - 16, children aged from11 – 16.
Authors of books for Young Adults (children from 11 – 16). Initial questionnaires will be sent to schools across the South West. Interviews will take place in 3 or 4 focus schools which have been invited to become part of the research project.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

a) *informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). An example of the consent form(s) must accompany this document.*
Headteachers will be fully informed of the nature of the research project in their schools. All participants, adults and children, will be made fully aware of the purposes of the research and the methods of research proposed. They will be made fully aware of how the resulting data will be stored and who will have access to it. They will be informed of who has ownership of the data and how data will be disseminated and published. Each participant will be given a copy of a letter explaining the project (attached). Where children and adults are being interviewed they will be asked to give formal permission through signing a letter (attached). In the case of children being interviewed parents/ guardians/ carers will also be asked to sign to give permission. All participants will have the right to withdraw from the research at any point.

b) *anonymity and confidentiality*

All participants and institutions will at all times remain anonymous. Due care will be taken to protect anonymity in the writing and presentation of the thesis.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Data will be collected through questionnaires and recorded interviews. Participants will at all times be fully informed as to the purpose of the research and will give informed consent. In the case of children, permission will also be sought from the head of the school and their parents or guardians. Each participant will have the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any point.

Questions relating to the theme of the research, what is quality in children's fiction, should not cause undue stress to participants. However the researcher will stop at any point where distress appears to have been caused and the participants offered the opportunity to withdraw.

Participants will be offered an opportunity to view and comment on outcomes of the research.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All materials arising from the research (questionnaires, recordings, transcripts) will be securely stored in a filing cabinet in a locked room.

Real names will be stored separately from data in order to protect anonymity.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

As a participant researcher asking questions I must be mindful not to influence answers in face to face interviews. The chosen focus schools will represent a demographic range but will all be in the SW of England.

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

---

This project has been approved for the period: November 2010 **until:** November 2012

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): ……

……..…**date:**……18/11/10

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference:…….

Signed:……..date:……...
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

APPENDIX 11: STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PUPIL FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research questions:

- ***How do teenagers/Young Adults define quality in the books they read?***
- ***How are teenagers'/Young Adults' reading choices made at home and at school?***

As I explained in the letter to you, I am interested in finding about what we understand by quality when this word is used about fiction Novels) for Young Adults (11 – 16 year olds).

I will be recording this interview and your discussions. I will let you see what comes from it. You may ask me to stop at any time if you wish to.

Perhaps we can start by asking you to complete this Diamond 9 Activity. I would like you to work as a group to decide which of the statements I have given you agree with most and which least. YOU arrange them into a diamond shape (1,2.3,2,1)

- *Pick up any points which arise.*

Supplementary questions:

When do you read fiction for pleasure?

What do you read for pleasure?

- *Explain why.*

What novels do you enjoy reading at school/ at home?

- ***Prompt for differences***
- ***Prompt for titles***

How do you find out about books to read?

- *Prompt: what are you looking for?*

How would you define teenage fiction?

- ***Prompt for reasons, examples***

How would you describe good quality teenage fiction?

- ***Prompt for meaning of ideas***
- ***Prompt for titles***

APPENDIX 12: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY

Background details

Questionnaire	Gender	Teaching experience	Professional Role	Year groups taught	School type	Degree	Own reading	Reasons for choosing own reading
1. 1a	M	20+	Head of Faculty	7 -11	Comprehensive (lang specialism)	Eng Lit/ Lang; MA American Studies	Coral Thief Still Point Man who Cycled the World	Often follow up Book at Bedtime on R4
2. 1b	F	0 - 5	Class teacher	7 - 11	State funded Academy	Eng Lit	House of Special Purpose Beloved The Peculiar Memoirs of Thomas Penman	Good first page Blurb that interests Quick flip that reveals good vocab and sophisticated descriptions
3. 1c	M	0 - 5	Class teacher	7 – 11	Comp with specialism	English and American Lit	Don't get time to read – how shocking is that!	Prose quality/ Narrative originality
4. 1d	F	0 - 5	Ass H o English	7 - 11	Comprehensive language specialist college	English	The Lies of Locke Lamora TKaMB The Empress of Icecream	If someone recommends it to me

5. 1e	F	0 - 5	Class teacher	7 - 10	Community School - Academy	English	Notes from an Exhibition The Wind Up Bird Chronicle The Bloody Chamber	I read a lot of books in the magic realism genre. I also read books by authors I have read and enjoyed before or who have been recommended by friends. Essentially a book with an intriguing plotline and creative ideas will engage me
6. 2a	F	11 - 15	HoD	7 - 11	Specialist Sports College	Philosophy	The Small Hand Great Gatsby Lucky Jim	Recommendations by friends or reviews The opening few pages usually does it for me I like revisiting books- like old friends
7. 3a	F	0 - 5	Teacher	7 - 11	Academy	English and Film	Artemis Fowl Fever Crumb The Dark Beneath	Being able to read and recommend to boys in the class
8. 3b	F	0 - 5	Class teacher	7 - 11	Academy	English Lit	Shooting the Elephant Chaos Walking Trilogy (Ness) Charis (Laurie Halse Anderson)	Recommendations
9. 3c	F	0 - 5	Class teacher	7 - 11	Community School	Eng Lang Studies and Linguistics	Fight Club Forensic Linguistics, An Introduction	Recommendation from someone who knows me well
10. 4	M	20+	HoD	8 - 11	Selective boys'; 12 - 18	Eng Lit	Heartstone London Thames: Sacred River	Often (sadly)connected with a specific course eg reading Charlotte Grey when teaching Birdsong

11. 5a	F	0 - 5	Teacher	10, 11	Independent day and boarding	English	The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo A Thousand Splendid Suns Jamaica Inn	Due to time, usually a scan of the blurb
12. 5b	M	0 - 5	Teacher	9 - 11	Independent	English	Lovely Bones Alice's Adventures in Wonderland	Read others by same author. Word of mouth
13. 6a	F	6 - 10	HoD	8, 10, 11	Comprehensive secondary	English and Law	The Ice cream Girls One Day Fractured	Recommendation Known author Genre
14. 6b	F	0 - 5	Teacher	7 - 11	Comp	English	One Day We are Made of Glue H P and the Philosopher's Stone	Usually recommended Film to accompany it Have to read it for work
15. 6c	F	0 - 5	Class teacher	7 - 11	Comprehensive	English	The Help The Other Family (Trollope) Ellis Island	Something that helps me to switch off from work and think about something completely different
16. 6d	F	15 - 20	Assistant Head (literacy)	7, 11	Comprehensive	English	Read quite a lot of N/F lately The Hand that First held Mine Started Early, Took my Dog The Ask and the Answer (ness)	Have some fav. Authors. Try to read a range of n/f, thrillers, teen reads, classics etc. Read a lot of recommendations. Also do choose books by their covers
17. 7a	F	6 - 10	Class teacher	7 – 9, 11	Church School	Eng lang and lit	Sister The Snowman The Angel's Game The Diceman	Unusual untidy style Twists and turns Developed plot Realistic characters
18. 7b	F	20+	Class teacher	7 - 11	Church	English	Lollipop Shoes The Help Great Expectations	Depends on situation Characters Nostalgia

19. 7c	F	11 - 15	Class teacher	8 - 11	Church	English/ education	n/a	Recommendations
20. 7d	F	20+	Teacher	7 - 11	Church VA	Anthropology and English	Hunting Unicorns The Green Wing Complete series Scripts Burning Bright	Challenging topics (eye opening) Real life Funny/ entertaining Haert-wrenching
21. 8a	M	20+	HoD/ CountyAdviser	9/10/11	Comprehensive Academy	Eng and American Lit	Of Human Bondage Regeneration Eagle Strike	Recommendations/reputation Know others by same author Curiosity Decide to keep up with teen fiction
22. 8b	F	15	Class teacher	7/8	Academy	Ed with English	Bookseller of Kabul On Chesil Beach Rowan the Stranger	Favourite author Recommendations Carnegie Nominations Recommendations from school librarian
23. 9a	F	0-5	Second i/c English	7 - 11	Comp; specialist arts college	English and French	The Monk Pigs in Heaven Wasp Factory	Word of mouth discussion with colleagues Newspaper reviews Demands of curriculum
24. 9b	M	20+	Class teacher	8-11, 13	Comp	English	Dragon Tattoo series Birdsong A Most Wanted man	Friend/wife recommend Top 10 list
25. 9c	F	15 - 20	HoD	9,10,11	Comp	Eng/ History	Chekhov a biography Wolf Hall The Inheritance of Loss	Recommendations of friends Book reviews newspaper/ radio
26. 10a	F	20+	SEN Specialist	7,9,10,11	Community School	Geography	Women Travellers The Zahir The Siege	Great characterisation A sense of place An interesting or different perspective

27. 10b	F	0-5	Class teacher	7 - 11	Community School	English	Interview with a Vampire A Time to Kill Oryx and Crake	I enjoy reading crime/ horror generally Also enjoy reading the classics to see what all the fuss is about
28. 11a	M	11-15	Assistant faculty leader	7,9,10	State funded comp	Theatre	The Road No country for old men	This particular author
29. 11b	F	20+	English teacher	9,10,11	Community school	English	Never let me go Room Number one Ladies Detective Agency bk 12	Blurb Recommendation
30. 11c	F	0-5	Class teacher	8-11	State funded comp	English Lit	The Thirteenth Tale The Distant Hours Notwithstanding	Element of escapism Being transported to another time/ location Well-crafted prose Engaging or emotive themes
31. 12a	F	0-5	Class teacher (G&T responsibility)	7 -13	Comp	English and Drama	The Tragic Universe American Gods Blood Red, Snow White	Escapism I like books that are complicated and intertextual Fun and funny too
32. 12b	M	15-20	Class teacher	7-11	comp	English	Bicycle Diaries Regeneration Trilogy What was left	Informative Good plot Gripping story Well-formed characters
33. 12c	F	0-5	Class teacher	7-11	comp	English/History	The Declaration The Hunger Games The Chrysalids	Subject matter Liking previous work by the author Intriguing blurb Opening pages
34. 12d	F	6-10	HoD	7-11	Comprehensive college	English Lit and Art History	The Book Thief Middlemarch Anything by Terry Pratchett	Recommendations from a friend or I choose anything to see if I like it

35. 13a	X	X	PGCE trainee	7/8/9	State maintained specialist technology college	English and criminology	A Crisis of Brilliance One Day Bringing it all Back Home	Recommendations from friends Review page of broadsheets Review shows Radio 4
36. 14a	F	0-5	Class teacher	7-11	Specialist maths and computing	English lit	The Kite Runner A Thousand Splendid Suns Oliver Twist	Recommendation Related to current teaching
37. 15a	F	0-5	Teacher	7-11	State secondary, National challenge	Cultural Studies	Wold Hall Vernon God Little Camomile Lawn	A recommendation by someone whose opinions I respect and who knows my taste
38. 16a	m	15-20	X	7-11	X	Fine Art	Hare with Amber Eyes Waterland	Leave this world Reflect on this world Return to the World better prepared
39. 17a	M	6-10	Co-curriculum coordinator	8 -11	Foundations School converting to Academy	BSc Media Production/ MA Eng Studies	Saturday No one Writes to the Colonel (Garcia) Closing Time Heller)	Previously enjoyed other author's work Personal recommendations Price!
40. 17b	F	0 -5	Class teacher	7,9	Foundation, soon to be Academy	Culture, Media and Communications	A Hundred Years of Solitude Holes Prince of Mist	Spiel on back of book Recommendation from others Same author of other books I have enjoyed Front cover
41. 17c	M	15 - 20	Class teacher	8 - 11	Academy	Eng Lit	Attack of the Unsinkable Rubber Ducks Any of the Shardlake series The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England	Intriguing Cover New Book by an author History/ Fantasy/ crime favourite genres

42. 18a	M	20+	HoD, Asst Head	9 - 11	State mixed selective	English BA; Creative writing MA	Books on the Cinema – Thomson The Michelin Guide Tess of the D'Urbervilles	Cover Instinct Mood
43. 18b	M	20+	Director of Studies	7, 9 -11	Grammar	English Lit	Poems, J H Prynne An Elemental Thing – Weinberger Back to the Local - Gorman	My interests
44. 18c	F	6 -10	Teacher KS3 coordinator	7 -10	Grammar, selective state	English Lang and Lit	Started early, Took my dog – Atkinson The White Tiger The Reluctant Fundamentalist	Ideally engaging , characters, ease (I have 2 children under 2 and work full- time and so do not get much quality reading time!) Cover and blurb (superficial but reliable)

45. 19	F	0 -5	Class teacher	7 - 11		English	Tractors in Ukraine .The Gateway to the Stairs The Corrections On Chesil Beach	Depends entirely on my mood, -if work is hectic and I'm worn out, just want something easy and feel good Since having babies, I shy away from scary, thriller, death related topics- always want to know if it ends reasonably happily! In holidays, I want something more meaty and longer with more depth. -always drawn to human relationship/ condition of life type novels (Tom Woolf, Franzen, Roth, McEwan) and love the minutiae of life stuff that McEwan does so brilliantly.

APPENDIX 13: QUESTIONNAIRE DATA - QUALITY

Questionnaire : Statements on Quality

Theme	Quotation
Accessible	Accessible The text needs to be accessible Dealing with challenging and engaging themes that pupils can relate to their own experience Across the ability range has clear themes that it explores in a mature accessible way Able to read and appreciate on different levels *Length*
Awards	I find it interesting to note that books which are awarded prizes for fiction aren't always chosen by children but by adults. Just because a book has won an award does not always mean it has quality
Challenging	Challenging challenging/ complex also needs to challenge Dealing with challenging and engaging themes that pupils can relate to their own experience Something that will move a student in some way and possibly surprise/challenge their preconceptions Challenges
Character	Good character; Believable characters Interesting storyline with developed characters and plot more complex themes/ characters/messages Engaging plot and character Engaging characters with credible, rounded characters that students can identify with in some way employing great style, plot and character in an original manner Characters that are not two dimensional *multi-faceted characters who change or develop;*
Classic	Often by the fact that it has stood the test of time Ideally with links to cultural or literary heritage
Cultural	Ideally with links to cultural or literary heritage

Engaging / entertaining	Immediately engaging Engaging quality can be measured in the engagement and interest level. it has to speak to the student – bridging their world and the world of the author Engaging Engaging plot and character Engaging characters Dealing with challenging and engaging themes that pupils can relate to their own experience Criteria for me is always that the student wants to read on. They can't wait for the next chapter Quality texts should provide a story to get 'lost' in for me is the ability to entertain and hold the reader engaging storylines/ narratives *Engaging and intriguing plot*
Gender	*gender balance*
Imagination	Appeal to imagination It needs to engage the imagination through vivid imagery Imaginative
Issues	Wider appreciation of cultural diversity Sensitive Issues dealt with Topical (wider issues – not boyfriend/girlfriend books) A book that engages with issues applicable to teenagers/ young adults KS3: lots of choice and they are 'quality' in that they allow discussion about issues Deal with serious topics in appropriate depth Possibly quality should be defined as books which deal with specific themes and issues in a sensitive and /or effective manner? Variety of issues dealt with *issues (not necessarily 'ISSUES') to discuss*
Language	Language and structure Beautifully crafted language well written (eg not flimsy romance) Clarity of expression Language that is accessible but will still stretch Use of imagery to work on and use as models – similes and metaphors for examples It needs to engage the imagination through vivid imagery figurative language Diverse vocabulary used
Message	more complex themes/ characters/messages
Original	Original Original Not totally literal Need to be original Originality, excitement, topicality employing great style, plot and character in an original manner quality authorial voice (literary/ unique

Other	Really difficult to think of quality substance and honesty credible (or brilliantly incredible) Quality in terms of reading is ultimately subjective Trying to give my teenage daughter good fiction and recommend good books to my tutor group is difficult because my taste gets in the way Same as anything else: Integrity; Humanity; Warmth; Moral Purpose; Absence of gratuitous violence Unfortunately I don't think that quality is often related to 'teen writing'.
Pace	for many fast-paced KS3 – must be far paced Originality, excitement, topicality quality is very subjective
Plot	NOT predictable Sophisticated narrative structure Language and structure Exciting plot Interesting narrative structure and style Good story Well developed storyline (not long necessarily but meaningful) Interesting storyline with developed characters and plot interesting narrative technique Engaging plot and character a unique or interesting narrative structure Real and adventure stories appeal more to boys who predominate in set 5/5 Early action or enigma to gain students'' interest early on Books which are well-crafted in terms of style and plot line Quality texts should provide a story to get 'lost' in If the book is not fantasy it should have some relevance to the way students live now, or what is happening in the world today employing great style, plot and character in an original manner engaging storylines/ narratives Plots that aren't formulaic I get book boxes full of texts for my tutor group and they are primarily horror, vampire themed or just plain vapid. *Engaging and intriguing plot*
Reading	and can make them actually want to read I taught one girl in Yr9 who had never read a book before – we read *Junk* in class and she loved it so much she asked for a copy for her birthday Criteria for me is always that the student wants to read on. They can't wait for the next chapter

Relevance	Social relevance it has to speak to the student – bridging their world and the world of the author Topical (wider issues – not boyfriend/girlfriend books) About a topic of merit It has relevance to it readers A book that engages with issues applicable to teenagers/ young adults Originality, excitement, topicality which deal overwhelmingly with the' theme' of the moment They need to be able to identify with some aspect of the story. Dealing with challenging and engaging themes that pupils can relate to their own experience Texts that relate to students' interests / lives etc I think the quality of books is relevant to the children who will read it with credible, rounded characters that students can identify with in some way If the book is not fantasy it should have some relevance to the way students live now, or what is happening in the world today
Structure	Well-crafted a unique or interesting narrative structure Books which are well-crafted in terms of style and plot line well-structured
Teaching	One can look at the skills of narrative writing: plot, character, setting , themes Use of imagery to work on and use as models – similes and metaphors for examples Appreciation of the craft KS4 tend to be exam texts and we have very little choice in what we do KS3: lots of choice and they are 'quality' in that they allow discussion about issues Quality is ***ABSENT*** in books written ***FOR*** students @ KS3 and KS4 *issues (not necessarily 'ISSUES') to discuss ; historical moments to discuss* *literary' elements to discuss (well-written)*
Theme	Meaningful and substantial subject matter By the fact that it can be read on several levels and has more complex themes/ About a topic of merit which deal overwhelmingly with the' theme' of the moment Dealing with challenging and engaging themes that pupils can relate to their own experience Possibly quality should be defined as books which deal with specific themes and issues in a sensitive and /or effective manner? has clear themes that it explores in a mature accessible way
Thinking	Those books that make a student think about something deeper They contain a literary truth and thus point the way to a more humane world. it has to speak to the student – bridging their world and the world of the author By the fact that it can be read on several levels and has more complex themes/ KS4 – thought-provoking Thought provoking

	reveal something of what it is to be human in an interesting or unusual way needs to challenge and provoke thought. Texts which encourage the reader to think about the way s/he thinks to evaluate their ideas/ viewpoints without feeling patronised/ criticised, A book whereby the reader feels the benefit of completing the journey either emotionally, intellectually or aesthetically can make student think and view the world differently Provokes
Writing	authoritative or creative prose Language and structure Writer's intent Interesting narrative structure and style well written (eg not flimsy romance)_ One can look at the skills of narrative writing: plot, character, setting , themes Clarity of expression interesting narrative technique Well written(grammatically accurate, range of vocabulary, sentence types, length for effect) Well crafted Well-written Writing should reach the reader on an emotional level Fluently written Quality of comedy or beauty Don't patronise Books which are well-crafted in terms of style and plot line A text that is well written employing great style, plot and character in an original manner quality authorial voice (literary/ unique Non-patronising to their readers Quality in terms of style of writing (more difficult to pin down – more subjective!) Craft; Sense of Audience *literary' elements to discuss (well-written)*

APPENDIX 14: QUESTIONNAIRE DATA – LOOK FOR IN A BOOK FOR 11 – 16 YEAR OLDS

Analysis of Questionnaire data

Look for in book

Theme	Quotations
Challenge	Challenge. A certain level of challenge something challenges their ideas or current perceptions likely to challenge a bit relevant and challenging themes Challenging, stimulating challenges stereotypes or prejudices challenge, inspiration
Characters	Good character descriptions interesting charas; gripping charas Identifiable characters Characters they can relate to Characters, likeable characters convincing characters; effective use of language when establishing character Characters/plot to suit both boys and girls relatable characters Captivating characters elements that link to the relevant age group eg age of characters great characters multi-faceted characters who change or develop
Classics	sometimes classics, sometimes newly published Widely recognised
Cultural	Broad cultural context.
Curricular	crossover with previously studied modules (war/ different cultures) cross-curricular opportunities cross-curricular links
Description	Good character descriptions Excellent detail effective use of language when establishing character good use of language accessible imagery
Encourage reading	motivation for further reading Engaging so that they will enjoy the reading experience

Engagement	Engagement Reader engagement Exciting book Something that is likely to grab the children's attention Subject matter appeals to students Engaging, interesting characters Engaging Likely to engage students Interesting Engaging issues or narrative Hold interest of boys or girls Engaging so that they will enjoy the reading experience Subject matter that will be interesting relevant to them Anything that will engage and interest them Engaging and intriguing plot
Enjoyment	Passion, originality, honesty, fun Interest/ enjoyment/
Emotion	Emotion
Gender	Accessible to both genders Boys – gore. Girls – romance Appeals to both genders Characters/plot to suit both boys and girls Appeals to both genders Hold interest of boys or girls suitable for both genders gender balance Will appeal to girls and boys alike
Issues	Issues sensitively dealt with moral, philosophical, personal, psychological issues to encourage students to think Engaging issues or narrative issues (not necessarily 'ISSUES') to discuss or historical moments to discuss
Mystery	Probably some mystery.
Pace	fast pace pace

Plot	Twist in the story Plot that is interesting and original Exciting book Boys – gore. Girls – romance Clear engaging plot good storyline Subject matter appeals to students Interesting and enjoying storyline draws them into plot action Good narrative Surprising and exciting plot Well constructed plot with an ending that provokes thought after reading Plot Characters/plot to suit both boys and girls Engaging issues or narrative Well-crafted language/ narrative that will expand their vocabulary and knowledge of linguistic techniques strong narrative voice Good plot excitement/ emotional involvement Engaging and intriguing plot Engaging plot
Reality	Life Some reality Topical, relevant to social issues real life believable contemporary / applicable themes
Resources	Lots of accompanying resources
Relevance	sometimes relevance to students' interests relevance to other teaching objectives relevant to age Themes / topics students can relate to/have an understanding of likely to relate to books they like relevant and challenging themes Growing up – bildungsroman genre and themes Interest/ enjoyment/ relevant to their experience Subject matter that will be interesting relevant to them Accessibility and relevance to students' lives/ interests elements that link to the relevant age group eg age of character Non-patronising Relevant to their own experiences; Subject matter that can be contextualised and made relevant to young people contemporary / applicable themes
Setting	Setting
Simplicity	Easy to read so students aren't discouraged. Ranges – 'difficulty' or 'ease' of reading accessible to low reading ages I would also choose books that are accessible to mixed ability classes with scope for differentiation Length
Teacher enjoyment	Something I've enjoyed

Theme	relatable theme It has something worth talking about; moral, philosophical, personal, psychological often theme Themes / topics students can relate to/ relevant and challenging themes Growing up – bildungsroman genre and themes Subject matter that will be interesting relevant to them Themes challenges stereotypes or prejudices Subject matter that can be contextualised and made relevant to young people I would select literature that has something to enrich students' understanding of wider issues. contemporary / applicable themes issues (not necessarily 'ISSUES') to discuss or historical moments to discuss
Thinking	Well-constructed plot with an ending that provokes thought after reading creative thinking Will make them think chance to develop empathy
Transformational	something that either takes them away from ordinary life or something with which the student can empathise sometimes broadening their experiences chance to develop empathy challenge, inspiration; an alternative to what they already read/ know
Unusual	not necessarily mainstream
Writing	Quality of prose. Writer's skill well written – good example of writing techniques well written Passion, originality, honesty, fun Well-crafted language/ narrative that will expand their vocabulary and knowledge of linguistic techniques strong narrative voice good use of language Quality of language - well written Non-patronising clear but creative prose style; accessible imagery literary' elements to discuss (well-written)

APPENDIX 15: QUESTIONNAIRE DATA – RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Recommended texts

Texts for class KS3

Title and amount of references	Individual comments
Animal Farm	Accessible yet challenging text for Yr9
Artemis Fowl	Exciting boy book. Code to break.
Boy	Still great non-fiction writing
Beware the Austin 7	Great story but modern

Boy in Striped Pyjamas **11 references**	Totally harrowing; Cultural awareness; raises tolerance; good clue hunting Cross-curricular links. Good at empathy, exploring naïveté Good stories but challenging Very dramatic ending If appropriate for the class, probably ion Yr7 students seem to engage with it and can be read on several levels. Interesting themes etc. Good links to film/media and cross-curricular with history/RE Writing from a perspective. Powerful technique of teaching horror of the Holocaust. Boy friendly Powerful and engaging subject matter and accessible, fairy tale structure Develop Empathy. Cross-curricular links. Emotion. Excellent movie to help accessibility Told by boy narrator Provoking, deceptive
Buddy	Entertaining insight into children with disadvantaged background. Boy friendly
Carrie's War	Great story and educational from a historical perspective
Christmas Carol **2 references**	Originality; mystery; historic grandeur Gender neutral; universal themes

Cirque du Freak **6 references**	Used this when first published. Still a firm favourite; engagement of students – horror/ gory Boys enjoy it Boys/ good plot Exciting. Fantasy – links to recent vampire novels etc Vampires, mystery – lots of imaginative language. Also a film Boys generally love the story
Clockwork **2 references**	Strong literary voice; allows easy discussion on the art of storytelling Storytelling techniques
Coraline	Really atmospheric, great use of English
Cosmic	Great for everyone but especially lower level readers
Crash in the Jungle	True story. Adventure
Devil and his Boy, The	References to Shakespeare with context re the Globe Theatre. Great characterisation. Good for drama
Face	Recommend. Modern. Engaging
Five people you would meet in heaven	Thought-provoking
Goodnight Mr Tom	Really good story for context and great plot
Graveyard Book	It's beautifully written and deals with common issues
Great Expectations	Done it for years and I know my way around it. It meets objectives of challenge, inspiration, an alternative to what they already read/ know

Holes **14 references**	Feel good Interesting narrative structure Enjoyable. Engaging. Links with American Children love it; identify with main chara Easy, fun, exciting, different, great characters Accessible, good springboard Author's use of theme to give moral judgement Originality; mystery; historic grandeur Lively characters, both adult and children, in the novel Exciting interwoven narrative and choice of locations. Boy friendly Language/ structure: enticing Language style. Coincides with bullying topic Entertaining; interesting structure; range of all round**.c**haracters Magic realism seems to appeal, plots, sub-plots, excellent characters
Hunger Games Trilogy	Characters at similar age. Original, captivating story. Creative opportunities
Jacobs Ladder	Good for older students. Engaging. Interesting themes and style
Johnnie's Blitz	'Picaresque'; history = all of us; 'Toilets' in literature

Junk	Fascinates them
Kes	Brilliant story. Great for boys
Kit's Wilderness	Very well structured narrative – dual narrative – helps teach structural effects
Lemony Snicket series	Interesting characters; beautiful illustrations; good use of narrative
Lord of the Flies **2 references**	Characterisation; issues Great for boys
Millions **4 references**	Funny, sad exciting Accessible, good springboard Excellent movie to help accessibility for SEN students. Creative opportunities. Dialogue
Mortal Engines	Great plot; innovative setting; brilliant(if feisty) major female character
Mouse and his Child	Imaginative. Challenge + emotional charge
New Dragon Book of Verse	'Old' fashioned (ie Henn/Moulded) quality
Noughts and Crosses **3 references**	Thought provoking Relevant and engaging issues eg prejudice, teenage relationships Deals with prejudice
Northern Lights Trilogy **3 references**	Fascinating Psychological complexities, philosophical discussion points Well written; developed storyline that hooks and entertains
Once, Morris Gleitzmann ✓ ✓	Brilliant, funny, moving, clever, narrative structure Sensitive explanation of theme. Relates to 'Boy in Striped Pyjamas', use of naïve narrator

	Humorous, lots of outside research to do. Wider WW2 reading to recommend, good gender balance / appeal
Of Mice and Men	
Other Side of Truth, The	Political; helps teach ideas of responsibility and bullying
Outsiders, The	Very engaging, especially to low level students
Percy Jackson	Myth Background
Poacher's son	About a dyslexic child
Private Peaceful **9 references**	Works every time; tremendous story; excellent characters; all can engage ; local (Cornish connection) Excellent characters; sensitive materials which opens a plethora of activities Quality Cross-curricular links. Great narrative voice Interesting historical topic. Dual narratives story Links to WW1 module; presents a complex subject in an enjoyable way Effective gripping Narrative crafted to build up mystery and suspense. Emotionally charged. 8c Strong story and characters, well-written, gender balance, further reading to recommend
Roald Dahl	
Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry	Narrative style

Shadows – Tim Bowler	Full of excitement plot wise but also lots of issues tackled: friendship, money, abuse, teen pregnancy
Sherlock Holmes Stories	Conscientiousness of style; historical perspective; modelling passages etc
Skellig **4 references**	Interesting, thought-provoking novel – themes which can be explored If appropriate for the class, probably in Yr7 students seem to engage with it and can be read on several levels. Interesting themes etc Gender neutral; universal themes Imaginative, extra reading (esp Blake), lots of issues (friendship, fear, maturity, love) to discuss
Stone Cold **7 references**	Cultural awareness; raises tolerance; good clue hunting Good stories but challenging Clever plot line. Engaging themes ideas Clipped style. Challenge to stereotypes (warden is not a man) Unusual storytelling. Grips Engaging plot and can be linked to 'homelessness' Plot is always a winner with Y9s – serial killer, girlfriend, running away from home, step parents. Interesting technically due to dual narrative, lots opportunity for dramatic irony exploration.
Stormbreaker **3 references**	Appeals to both genders Exciting and fun – film to go with it

	Boys love spies and action
The Cay	Lots of opportunities for activities
The Farthing??? Five(3b)	
To Kill A Mockingbird	Literary classics
Tuck Everlasting	'Big issues' – death and dying – friendship; loyalty etc
Tulip Touch	Relatable subject matter
Uncle Montagu's Tales of Terror	A collection of short stories that are quite dark… quirky, very original. ***Very*** well written
Unique	Tremendous reads
Whispers in the Graveyard	Originality; mystery; historic grandeur
White Darkness, The, Geraldine McCaughren	
Why the Whales Came	Emotional, realism
Windsinger **3 references**	Brilliant, imaginative, perceptive, fantasy, narrative structure Gender neutral; universal themes To get 'lost' in the fantasy
Witch Child	Historical fantasy; very popular amongst KS3. Gruesome parts which they enjoy

Texts for independent reading KS3

Animal Farm **3 references**	Simple yet complex! Potential for historical research. Nature of satire Political issues; introduction of satire Short. Clear
Alex Rider et al	Fast paced/ action
All Charlie Higson (boys)	Action packed, popular
All Jacqueline Wilson ✓	Relevant social issues. Easy to comprehend Appeals to girls
Anthony Horowitz books	Great thriller stories
Any Carnegie prize nominees and winners	Relevant quality writing. Range of nominees suits a range of ability/interests/ages
A Swift Pure Cry, Dowd	Brilliant writing on sensitive themes. Best description of labour I've reads!
Bad girls	Engaging and something they can relate to
Before I die	Sense of voice: extraordinary
Book Thief	For intelligent readers
Boy in Striped Pyjamas **4 references**	Another more recent classic that students always enjoy Moral lessons included Pace and plot. Really shocking but well written Very similar to 'Once' – gender balanced kin terms of interest
Chain Gang, The	Pictures, series, topical and current. Low Reading Age.
Cherub (Mucahamore)	Appeals to boys

Classics	To break away from 'teen' reading or Louise Rennison to indulge it
Curious Incident of the Dog…	Challenging/ related to teenagers/ universal themes
Dahl (all books) ✓ **2 references**	Entertaining, playful, imaginative Still classic
Dark Materials trilogy **2 references**	Hugely complex ***and*** engaging without being inaccessible. High popularity= high discussion levels Stretches the more able both in terms of content and style
David Copperfield	Enjoyable. Ignored.' Moving'
Day of the Triffids (or similar)	Page turners with a range of 'what if?' questions.
Diary of a Wimpy Kid	Engaging for lower ability pupils. Use of cartoons makes it accessible to lower literacy levels
Graveyard Book	Unusual take on a theme
Great Expectations (Just Bk1)	
Harry Potter **2 references**	 Fantastic fun
Hitchhiker's Guide/ Dirk Gently novels	Unique text; great comic use of prose
Hobbit, The	Leads to L of the Rings

Holes **6 references**	Good plot development. Students build on ideas, cultural exploration Easy to read. Good issues 'Young' issues – considerations of friendship, punishment etc Suspensefully crafted plotline and characters that students can relate to Easy to read. It has nice, simple style Imagination building
How the Whale Became	Ideal for home/ independent reading As stories are short. Nice take on evolution.
How We Met	For more mature Y9s, tackles teen issues
Hunger Games	Fast paced plot, unlikely heroine
I am Number 4	Pacy, exciting, action-packed
Inkheart	Orwellian future
Invisible Man, The	Broaden range of reading. Accessible for higher level students, gripping concept and excellently written
Jamaica Inn	Cornish literary heritage; wonderful settings
Kit's Wilderness	I know that it has been enjoyed by previous students
Knife of Never Letting Go, The	Great for boys
Lemony Snicket ✓	Fun/humour/interest/enjoy Just excellent; Funny, engaging and sensitive
Malorie Blackman (any) **4 references**	Thoughtful (girls) Challenging stereotypes Deals with issues and engaging characters For more mature Y9s, tackles serious issues

Michael Morpurgo (any)	Enjoyable and well written-; broad range of subject matter Imagination building
Millions **4 references**	Good text; real pace Moving, funny and other excellent books by same author For the humour; it's heart-warming Funny and serious. Fab for everyone
Morris Minor, The	Ghost Story (contemporary). Low R.A.
Mortal Engines	Thrilling, part of a series, student will reads more, very imaginative
My Swordhand is Singing	If you like Twilight, try this
Northern Lights Trilogy **4 references**	Just brilliant! Great plot lines, imaginative setting. Provoking themes and alternative meaning Well written; developed storyline that hooks and entertains
Noughts and Crosses **4 references**	Topical, well written, developed. Narrative voice Challenges expectations
Of Mice and Men **2 references**	Compelling
Once	Powerfully written. Deals with issues for Yr9 pupils

Private Peaceful **4 references**	Issues. History Useful for links to history studies Grounded in grim reality Well written and engaging
Phillip Pullman	Thought provoking
Rattle Bag	Variety
Refugee Boy	Awareness of other cultures
Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry	
Ruby Red	Engaging , exciting
Shan, Darran books	Exciting and lots of them
Sisters Grimm Series	Imaginative
Skeleton Key, Horowitz	Thrilling, part of a series, student will reads more, very imaginative
Skulduggery Pleasant **2 references**	Fun/humour/interest/enjoy Engaging, excellent character description
Small Steps	Good plot development. Students build on ideas, cultural exploration
Stone Cold	Easy to understand; controversial language that students find amusing
Street Child	Well written and 'educational'
The Recruit Series	Engages reluctant boy readers
Twilight	Emotive, gripping
War Horse **2 references**	Avoids sentimentality but retains real heart. My sons love it. Good for historical context. Fantastic story told from an unusual viewpoint
Windsinger Trilogy **2 references**	Good read – storyline
Wilson Jacqueline	17b Deals with puberty/ family related issues
Wolf Brother	17c I enjoyed it!

Other	I try to suit book to the student!

Texts for class KS4

Orwell **1984 3 references** **Animal Farm 3 references**	Orwell is, in my opinion, the most significant commentator in modern life Extends the AF exploration – satire, dystopia AF can be read on two different levels Easily accessible and engaging (1984) Importance historically, ideas, themes and relevance
A woman in Black	
Buddy	Still a good story and one that students love (based on what 's in the book cupboard!)

Catcher in the Rye **6 references**	Important, energising great story characters/ something kids relate to Inspires lots of debate on teenage themes of isolation and alienation. Contentious, plenty to talk about Still totally speaks for youth Complexity levels are easily differentiated. Engaging narrative/ approachable voice
Christmas Carol	13a Engaging story. Lots of social context and historical reference to tease out.
Chrysalids	Apocalyptic – about prejudice, racism
Colossus	Poetic style. Impact of word choice
Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time **6 references**	Empathy Moral insights; well written; storyline Truthful, emotional text. Lots to do from it Complexity levels are easily differentiated. Engaging narrative/ approachable voice (plus great narrative structure/ control) Deals with serious issues. Engaging Challenging subject matter. YR10 love it!
Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde	Important and accessible intro to C19 lit
Dracula	Fantastic for setting atmosphere
Dubliners/ Big Book of Short Stories	Quality but depressing
Grapes of Wrath	Complements of Of Mice and Men

Great Expectations **4 references**	Because of the humour Experience of classics and links to present day Beautifully crafted, contextually challenging Plot character, style and tone
Heroes (Cormier) **3 references**	Engages boy reluctant readers. Gets pupils to respond Engaging, can relate to current themes. Links with current issues Fast moving tense narrative
Holes	About kids of their age in trouble. Can identify
Hound of the Baskervilles	Rollicking good read
I'm King of the Castle	
Inspector Calls **2 references**	Compelling Context/themes/ dramatic texchniques
If This is a Man	To make them think
Jane Eyre	GCSE again. I am passionate bout this book. So can sell it well. Very gripping story. Good for most able students. A classic
Kes **2 references**	 Pupils identify with boy
Kite Runner	9b Topicality

Lord of the Flies **9 references**	Higher level; developed morality Exam Text with easily identifiable themes but something which student can identify, friendship; bullying, empathy and identity. A Finch someone we should all aspire to be like Much as TKAMB: Social complexities, moral imperatives, evocation of childhood; plus the nature of good and evil Enjoyed by all abilities each time I've taught it Themes /style/ context Themes of leadership/ bullying/ isolation/ power Engaging and challenging themes which spark pupils' imaginations An interesting dystopian novel Universal and timeless discussions ie human nature and civilisation
Lovely Bones	Good bridge to adult fiction
Martyn Pig	Dark humour, simple
Nought and Crosses ✓ **2 references**	Issues involved No comment

Of Mice and Men **16 references**	Easy to follow; relevant social issues; builds character Exam Text with easily identifiable themes but something which student can identify, friendship Character exploration and empathy I read it at school and loved it. Easy to read Easy Easy to read , dramatic ending GCSE again. Can't enjoy this myself but students seem to. It's short Engaging, evocative Accessible but not patronising. Ending never fails to challenge Themes of loneliness/ relationships/ American Dream text. Short, straightforward. Engages their interest Fab for lower level readers It is overdone for a reason – accessibly brilliant style/ timeless themes/ well differentiated Deals with key themes Easy, plenty of scope for really exploring characters, structure etc – particularly bridge set GCSE. So accessible

Oranges are not the only Fruit	Beautifully written. Challenging issues
Oliver Twist	Themes make it accessible to range of abilities at KS4
Pride and Prejudice **3 references**	Storyline/issues; transcendent storyline Beautifully crafted, contextually challenging A good introduction to period literature
P'Tang Yang Kipperbang	TV is/ can be challenging
Rani and Sukh	Challenging but accessible. Nice update of a classic
Set text list **2 references**	

To Kill A Mockingbird **14 references**	Too many to mention Higher level; developed morality Exam Text with easily identifiable themes but something which student can identify, friendship etc Where to start? Social complexities, moral imperatives, evocation of childhood KS4 so dominated by GCSE. Students do enjoy it. I do too. Themes etc. Lots of people's fav book Topical issues, lots to discuss Themes/ style context Themes of growing up/ prejudice / family Themes; courtroom scenes. Good for role play Deals with powerful and engaging issues and students can relate to emotional impact Timeless classic. All the students I've done it with loved it It's a great introduction to themes of racial prejudice, friendship, community , childhood. Fantastic film as well To begin to understand another culture Still relevant, still essential reading for or teens

Touching the Void **2 references**	Exam Text with easily identifiable themes but something which student can identify, friendship. Autobiographical tale Short, straightforward exciting adventure
Winter's Tale	Weird or what challenge
Wuthering Heights	Fantastic for setting atmosphere
Yellow Wallpaper	Engaging, short, lots of issues, able to focus on close analysis
Other **2 references**	What's on the syllabus Sadly- have to obey exam board. Would love to do Hardy: *FFMC*

Texts for independent reading KS4

	Anything that engages and stimulates pleasure in reading
1984	
A Thousand Splendid Suns **3 references**	Different Culture, moving, real page turner Evocative, engaging challengjng A powerful story that is particularly relevant today
Across the Nightingale Floor	Setting works well; self-discovery novel with exciting events. Interesting structure – 2 narrators
Animal Farm **2 references**	 Historical / political context
Any Carnegie prize nominees and winners	Relevant quality writing. Range of nominees suits a range of ability/interests/ages

Anything by Phillipa Gregory	Moves them away from the classic girls authors aimed at younger readers eg Jacqueline Wilson
Austen - anything	Stretch the brightest because of satirical style
Bill Bryson **2 references**	Humour; Non-fiction can be fun
Billy Liar **2 references**	Still relevant Gets boys with mature cynical humour
Blood Brothers	13a Accessible, great storyline, appeals to boys, great themes
Book Thief **3 references**	Challenging, engaging, something different, modern Unusual style and a real page turner Engaging, strong characters - pictures
Born on a Blue Day	Empathy
Catch 22 **2 references**	Hilarious! (And genius in every way)
Catcher in the Rye	Interesting and thought-provoking
Classics **2 references**	Broader reading and cultural reference To develop sustained reading for understanding of historical context and preparation for A Level
Cold Comfort Farm	Girls seem to like it – funny!
Coral Thief	Fast moving, intelligent
Crow Girl Returns	Of interest to this age group. Adult but easy vocab. Shortish. Lowish Reading Age.

Curious Incident of the Dog In the Night-Time **4 references**	Issue based. Comic If I ruled the world everyone would red this. Interesting style. Relevant to teens. Good theme/messages. Teach empathy and narrative form- post-modernism Engaging, strong characters - pictures
Enduring Love	'Adult' but not too much
English Patient	Language – quite beautiful!
Evil Cradling	Ideas, style of writing
Falling Awake	Of interest to this age group. Adult but easy vocab. Shortish. Lowish R.A. Realistic approach to drugs
Generation X	Interesting and thought-provoking
Great Gatsby	
Go Between, The **2 references**	Contextually challenging Thought-provoking and short!
Handmaid's Tale	Interesting ideas and themes
High Fidelity	Funny, well-written, enjoyable
Hitchhiker's Guide	Humour, Wacky boys. Great writing
Hound of the Baskervilles	Might make them read more Holmes
House of Special Purpose	Very engaging, topical
I Capture the Castle	Quality
I know why the Caged Bird Sings	Inspirational, poignant

Jane Eyre **4 references**	A fave of mine which taught me valuable lessons at this age A good introduction to pre 1914 novels Powerfully written and crafted to stretch higher ability students For the keen - excellent
Junk	Controversial and therefore interesting
Kite Rider	Culture
Kite Runner **6 references**	Thrilling Evocative, engaging challengjng Engaging and good bridge to adult fiction Powerful multicultural text A brilliantly moving story with some unexpected twists
Knife of Never, Ness	Riveting narrative of boy becoming adult
Lovely Bones	10b Adult matter handled in a very delicate way
Malorie Blackman	Deals with issues and engaging characters
Man who Cycled the World	General interest; interesting re hist and geopg
Memoirs of a Geisha	Cultural lessons. Well written
Mister Pip, The **2 references**	Intertextuality; political Different cultures; shock factor; young narrator
My Family and Other Animals	Fun
My Sister's Keeper	Moves them away from the classic girls authors aimed at younger readers eg Jacqueline Wilson

Northern Lights Trilogy **2 references**	Fantastic writing Well written; developed storyline that hooks and entertains
Outsiders	Written by a young woman – great story – great characters
Patrick Ness	Good stories but challenging
Perfume	Challenging, engaging, something different, modern
Phillip Pullman - anything	Good stories but challenging
Pride and Prejudice	A fave of mine which taught me valuable lessons at this age
Rattigan, T Collected Poems	What's Not to like? A vanishing world
Regeneration	Fantastic writing and great characters
Richard and Judy Book Clubs – Galaxy etc	They cover a range. They are popular. They have some 'quality'. They're easy to get hold of.
Small Island	A different perspective to consider (than white North Devon!)
Still Point	Narrative/ historical context
The Empress of Ice cream	Challenging, engaging, something different, modern
The Help	Thought provoking and entertaining
The Hunger Games **2 references**	Appeals to teenage boys and girls
The Moonstone	A fave of mine which taught me valuable lessons at this age; Great intro to detective genre
The Shardlake Novels	Taut mix of the detective genre and historical realism
The Truce	An intelligent, moving text
This Boy's Life	Great main character and relevant to students
Ties that bind, ties that break	Recommended to me as a fantastic book for KS4
To Kill A Mocking Bird **3 references**	Classic – issues and characters Wonderful, challenging, enjoyable

	All students should read this. Such a great basis for understanding many themes and issues.
Touching the Void	Great real life story
Twilight **4 references**	Characters, plot, real development Girls love vampires! Gives access to horror genre – more reading Unusual/ gripping
Until Proven Guilty	Of interest to this age group. Adult but easy vocab. Shortish. Lowish R.A.
Wasp Factory, The	Grim! They love it!
Wuthering Heights **3 references**	Girls! Teenage angst interest Treads the line between love and obsession – story thematically Become familiar with classic gothic literature
Woman in Black	Clear genre issues and ideas of pastiche/homage+ it's scary!
KS5	
Anything by Barbara Kingsover	Highly crafted and exciting novels
Other	According to student! No blanket recommendations

APPENDIX 16: TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLES

Appendix 16a: Transcript extract 1: Interview with Head of Department

as English teachers we always have to choose text to read in class and text to recommend for private reading and here I notice there is quite a distinction could you talk about that a little bit?

HoD: Well I suppose (the list is not exhaustive) but *Mortal Engines* I have already spoken about, *Cirque de Freak* because the kids love it…they just…when I first bought that in when I was first published the kids really really engaged with the central character of Darren Shan um his use of cliff hangers and the end of each…and very manageable very short chapters immediately engaged our lower end really liked that again lots of interesting themes coming out of it about do we think that freak shows are acceptable and how times have changed and they really like that and that's why I recommend that for some students in KS3. *Skellig* I love by David Almond I love it – interestingly when I bought this in – it must be 10 years ago I guess and I wasn't head of department then but I bought it during the summer holiday and I bought it in and we were teaching it to a top Y7 group and I said do you know this has won the …I think it was what is the equivalent of the Orange… and one of the very good students said: that's probably been judged by adult rather than students. Which I thought was an insightful comment because it probably has. I have taught this and I have seen it taught and again those very challenging things can be bought out about religion and all of that so I thought it was an interesting text but sometimes we do get carried away with what we think we ought to be teaching and what kids actually like to read.

RH: I think we'll come on to that in a minute but I'm quite interested because the ones you recommend for independent reading there's a real variety as well because I have not read The Hunger Games but I keep hearing about them but I understand that what you've said they are fast paced.

HoD: Yes the heroine is really feisty and fights her way through and why I think that's a good text – I am talking for KS3 is because a lot of our particularly in our school a lot of our girls have quite poor aspirations and see themselves…they have a poverty of aspiration then and they see themselves through their sexuality rather than what they can achieve through life and I like to promote fiction that (for that reason *Mortal Engines* is one of those) but promote female characters as not being passive but active characters so that's why I like the *Hunger Games*. *My Sword Hand is Singing* is interesting because I've tried to read the Twilight Novels and failed I just can't get into it now whether that's because we went through that period of Goosebumps and everyone was reading them

and I just got so sick of seeing them in private reading the Twilight books that I just thought I can't bear it. I think Marcus Sedgwick is a clever Author in that he's taken old myths and legends and written a story round it and I quite like that. *Northern Lights* I think goes without saying I think it's wonderful.

RH: It's quite a challenging read for some of them isn't it?

HoD: And thought provoking ideas there as well.

RH: But they do like it. It's interesting because I am going to ask you to define teenage fiction in a minute but if we just go on to KS4 because the 11-16 age range is as it is in school it's so complex in term of growing up physically intellectually emotionally and these things impact on their reading so if we could just do the same thing with the KS4 texts the ones you do in class: Mice and Men, Lord of the Flies, To kill a Mocking Bird, Touching the Void-

HoD: -*Woman in Black*, all of those so basically because they are exam texts now I will be utterly honest when I read – I just read the recommendations for the new National Curriculum and it did mention there that 90% of the Schools surveyed taught *Of Mice and Men a*s a text and the reason for that as I said is easy identifiable themes, figure, characters…I mean I still think it's a wonderful book.

RH: I agree.

HoD: And I think there is an awful lot of snobbishness around that I went to a subject leaders course once where a very respected examiner pooh-poohed the idea of *Of Mice and Men* I mean it's won countless awards-

RH: Fantastic Book.

HoD: I love it but it is very very easy and in our game we are jumping through hoops it's something that engages the kids in 6 sections we'll do it for me thank you very much, very nice identifiable structure and I teach that I have to say quite successfully – we always get around 90% for our literature so we teach that quite successfully across foundation and the higher range so that's the reason for that. I am enjoying the new specification now because it's allowed us to teach other texts so we've got Susan Hill in now which is great, *Touching the Void, To kill a Mocking Bird* has always been there as you now and *Lord of the Flies* um The Crucible and things like that, I love all of that, so it's given us a wider range but basically we…although there is more freedom around the new specifications we are still very much dictated to be controlled assessment and time.

RH: And someone else's view of quality.

HoD: And someone else's view of quality yeah. So we are still there.

RH: And I am interested with the private reading because I don't want to put words in your mouth at all but this is an age where private reading sometimes takes a back seat because they have got a lot of other things to do, do you find that?

HoD: Yes I do and we spoke briefly about it but it's always been since I have been head of department I have made it departmental policy that there's a box of books in each classroom but children/students/young people are encouraged to bring their own private reading some of this is a little cynical I have to say because a few years ago I identified that our students were – our A/A* were terribly worried about responding to text – is it the right thing? So for that reason I decided to put a book list together for Independent Reading and I bought in 2 or 3 of *The Handmaidens Tale* and books that I have mentioned there and they are kept in the English classrooms the A/A* classrooms the Bs you know the upper group but also I worked with the Librarian and we had a KS4 reading scale up there, that's lovely because as soon as they get to KS4 they feel very grown up and they rush out and get *A Clockwork Orange* – all very naughty and that sort of thing but that's the reason for recommending is because I think it's my job even though I am probably putting my ideas, I think it's my job to wonder my ideas.

RH: Yes I wondered about that ,with that choice?

HoD: Yea I mean again that list is not exhaustive they are interesting texts some of them cross over to AS Level and I just feel that they need that wider experience and because we never get to see them past 16 I just feel that they need a little bit of push – you know a little bit of push that way so that's the reason for that.

Appendix 16b: Transcript extract 2: Interview with class teacher

but what do you see as that range of characters, who are those characters?

- Well my teaching experience so far had been teaching mixed gender groups so you are always conscious that you need a book that has female and male characters so they are going to find somebody that they can relate to, somebody they are interested in. There are some books that I've had experience of teaching particularly in my training that have been either boy focused or girl focused and you do worry if either sex is then losing interest because it's all about the girls, and although that doesn't mean it's not for boys, you feel that maybe some boys may think that, that all this is it's all girl characters there, it's about their friendships and it's about their relationships and that's not really relevant to me and it's something I'm interested in.

RH: That's interesting, can you think of any books that fulfil, well not fulfil but represent that, boys or girls ???

- It was a good book but it was called *The Tulip Touch* and it is set around two girl characters: one of which is very, trying to think of an appropriate term to describe her, she has had a hard life and it comes out in her behaviour she is quite manipulative and nasty to the other people around her but there is the only male character I can recall from that book is the Dad so for boys it's not many, and he only plays a small role, so I think they enjoyed it to an extent but it needed to be more balanced.

RH- That's really interesting and just following on from that because you talk about characters for boys and girls, is there anything else that will help a book be multi-gender or gender free I suppose?

- Definitely, there is certain genres from my experience it seemed to be quite cross over like fantasy which we don't actually teach really, those books that don't really come into it, things like Artemis Fowl which kids do actually read quite a lot of, boys and girls equally seem to be interested in that, and my creative writing club love things like Dr. Who, both equally girls and boys.

RH- Interesting.

- So actually maybe bring in different genres cross over more would be good.

RH- And just looking at what you put here: "none of the three Private Peaceful, Holes or Heroes are fantasy books are they, we'll come to them in a minute. Are any of the three that you would recommend in KS3 for independent reading.

- Ya, which more of fantasy

RH – Alright

- Because it's got elements of kind of ex-men and heroes and TV show and definitely fantasy there.

RH- That's interesting, and just to get back to this, you said for a book to be on a topic that can be related to other curriculum subjects now you talked about war and private peaceful is there a cross over with history there and

- Definitely I just think, so reading is not an isolated thing within English so students can relate it to Oh we're reading about this in this novel but actually Oh ya it takes an element of this of sort of about in history and takes elements of, often there are debates about war debates and things they pick up on so maybe in PSE or RE, and lots of other things around the curriculum that they've been studying.

RH:And would you be seeking to make those links explicit or looking for a book where you can make those links in specific.

- Yeah definitely, I mean even this book which is one I recommended for independent reading, I was reading it and kind of subconsciously thinking Oh it could link really well with, it mentions artists in WW2, not obvious, not necessarily just WW2 history kind of thing, it is also about science and eugenics and about

RH- Wow

- Perfect. Lots of issues you can kind of get your teeth into it, link with other subjects and broader issues and maybe if in contemporary issues in the news and things as well.

RH- It is very interesting and that in itself is fascinating but the difference between the text to read in class and the ones for independent reading, I expect most English teachers would say there is a difference, can you articulate that difference, that's a hard one maybe.

- Yeah, I think the text used as a class read you have to bear in mind the balance and so many issues with the different abilities , different genders, and trying to keep a hole class interested with certain tasks related to the novel, whereas with the independent reading you can really personalise it a lot more and think about gender or about genre or about like I said that they are classics, there are things

that can challenge and extend readers as well, but you feel you can't do that so much in a class reader.

RH- That's interesting and you've also identified private peace for year 7 ***Holes*** *for year 8 and* ***Heroes*** *for year 9, you've written quite fully about what the books do, we've got sympathy for the main characters with* ***Private Peaceful****, for multiple narrative in* ***Holes*** *and provokes debate and discussion amongst students, do you in your own mind are you looking at some sort of progression in the books you are choosing in KS3?*

- Yeah definite, I think you can tackle more challenging subject matter by the time you get to year 9, I don't know if you're familiar with *Heroes* by Robert Cormier

RH- I don't know that one very well.

- There's actually a rape in that one so that's why you would never do it with year 7

RH- Interesting

- And I think actually it was on the syllabus a long time for KS4, as GCSE text but in my last school we did with the top set year 9 group to challenge them and we had some very interesting debates because it's not explicit, it's a very complex situation in the book but it's also very shocking at the same time because it's an older man and a teenage girls

RH- Right, that's controversial topic isn't it?

- But it really, it gets them thinking, it's done in a way where it's not too explicit, you can have it in a classroom and use it as the debate but it does get them interested , get s them thinking about issues.

RH- And that's fascinating because that's obviously a very challenging theme or issue, is the language, is the way that the book is written equally challenging?

- Yeah, I think there is certain imagery metaphors used like there is a Rec centre which is symbolic of the rapist character and his wrecked life after the war and he is kind of painted quite nicely first of all but it's, the imagery I think that is associated with him they are quite subtle and how they also relate to his character.

RH- And that is quite a sophisticated way of reading a text as well isn't it?

- You could read it more simply if it was a lower ability group of thinking just pick out the effect of the war and the characters and the relationships between the three main characters.

RH- But you will be looking for something would you where you could challenge some of the readers

- Yeah

RH- So that they could see various levels

- Yes I think there a lot of text that you can differentiate quite nicely, you can read them as a nice story but you can go further and actually think about language techniques and how it's structured.

RH- That's really interesting, following on from that can we just see what you have chosen for KS4 and if we can take the same idea of what they offer and what you are looking for in your choices both of the reads in class and the independent reading, could you explain your choices?

- Well *Of Mice and Men* again is quite something to what we were just talking about at KS3 really, it's a book that all abilities, from my experience, all genders enjoy really, they engage with the story and characters but if you look closely at some of the imagery and some of the language and how it's kind of built up with four shadowing, you can extend the more able as well, so I really enjoyed teaching that because the kids enjoy it but they can also be challenged by it.

RH- And you have the story don't you as you say but you have all the other issues, what about Under Milk Wood that's an interesting one is that a syllabus choice or is that your choice?

- It was on my first school they had a Welsh warden it was part of the options on there and as I'd studied it at University I was a bit biased I think towards using that but it also, I had a top set, so it was more, I thought it maybe more challenging than the spectacles another bit because it was on syllabus because of the language and the way he plays with language. But also related it to sort of modern ideas like a soap opera and Little Britain with the funny image and, so I kind of tried to make it relevant as well, I was thinking about Oh we can really unpick this language and get into these funny characters and the unusual kind of perspectives you have in there.

RH - And how did they cope with the language?

- They found it very odd at first but I think actually when they got the concept of it they enjoyed it, like I said, relating it to other things and kind of sit-coms and comedies now use language in a comedian way so if you relate it to that I think they can enjoy it.

RH - So that comes back again am I right in saying that to the issues or things that they can relate to?

- Yeah I think it is important if you can to relate it to something they can

*RH - What about **To Kill A Mockingbird** it's been on school syllabuses since it was written in 1960 I think and it's still there, what do you think?*

- So what is it that, because it is one of those that sort of a modern classic, isn't it, if we can unpick that, what is that you said that links to University that has got a sense of progression, can you pin point anything in the book apart from the obvious issues which are obviously still as relevant as they were when it was written? The way the book is written.

- It's interesting that they have picked a child narrator as well and that links into lots of other books that are being promoted at the moment. I think you have got an interesting combination of ideas in the plot as well, it's kind of the story of a little girl narrating about her Dad things but you have got the court case, you've got the mysterious character, there is lots of interlinking things, it's quite complex in the way that it's structured .

RH - Yes there is a complex team of characters and few of the characters, isn't there, some of it is the adults views some of it is the child's view, it's a great book. What about the ones you have recommended there is some really interesting contrast here because you put the classic such as Frankenstein and also two by very modern authors, Kevin Brooks and Benjamin Zephaniah for the independent reading What are you trying to do with these texts, what does each of these have to commend them?

- I found it quite difficult actually to pick the independent reading text because I read a lot of literature aimed at teenagers particularly for the Carnegie book awards, it's very hard to know I must say first of all, the first one Kevin Brooks, I think has, ..it has things that teenagers can relate to sort of drinking and things that maybe they will be surprised that they are in a book that they kind of see on TV and films but they don't see it happen in books they read especially in class, but at the same time it's got a very good story, page turning you know kind of, you want to kind of find out what happens next, it's quite thrilling and the narrative as well. But I think it would be particularly good for engaging student as in wanting to read more independently than turning on a film or TV show instead, because it's got the same kind of pace and excitement

RH - So it's the pace and excitement that you are going for, the enjoyment in a way. Would you say it's a different sort of enjoyment from the text read in class?

- Possibly because these are contemporary whereas the class readers are obviously more classics and kind of traditional Ya I just think for independent reading obviously I'd like to encourage classics as well and a wide range of reading so I've put in *Frankenstein* for example but I think actually making the aware of what's available and what's being written at the moment because compared to when I was a teenager I think the richness of what's out there now is amazing, they've got such good authors coming out, they've got such good choice, so they are not always aware of it, they don't use libraries as much I don't think so I should have just given them authors to look into maybe read more of as well.

Appendix 16c: Transcript extract 3: Interview with 5 YR 11s at a selective school

….RH - That's excellent thank you, I wonder if there is anything missing from there because these are ideas that teachers came up with we are not saying that it's an exclusive list; anything you'd like to have put there that is maybe more important for you, makes a good novel.

- I'm not sure like personally but I think a lot of them like these two are definitely they need to be or maybe these they are easy to understand and the impact one, there are quite essential in a good novel but I think the rest they are like, I think Ah, it's quite hard to describe what is a good novel , but I don't think a lot of them are vital in it like, it's just because it doesn't have current issues I don't think, if it did or it didn't I don't think that defines what is a good novel and the same with "characters that you can relate to" I think like it can be about some sort of alien culture sort of thing as in like you don't know anything about it and yet you can still find it a really good novel but I can't really put my finger on what I would define as a good novel.

RH - It's quite hard isn't it?

- Yeah

RH - Any of the rest of you got any ideas.

- I think there should probably be more emphasis on actual nature of the plot because whilst these are all looking at like sort of thematic nature of a book, it's not really focusing on what the book should be in itself and that is something for entertainment.

RH - Can you say a bit more about that?

- Sort of plot that is fascinating at the beginning and you might want to actually read as opposed to something like how complicated it is, is definitely something that is important but it doesn't mean that something can be simple and not fulfilling in itself as a book.

RH - Anyone like to build on that or any other ideas?

- There might be for example you can have a really simple book but if it's very humorous it still might be quite a good read but other books sort of, I give you H's

book which was meant to be complicated theme like a crime book or something and that was simple it might not be a good book, but other themes might be better simple.

- And that is why a good novel should handle shows and thing and you like whether because it's about something like a foreign culture or something like that, or whether it's just about something very, something you are very familiar with but they bring it out in a new kind of light, I think it needs to bring something new to the table rather than just

RH - That is interesting, yeah, yeah. We can possibly come back to that because it's quite hard to think out of nowhere for these ideas but what do you like reading for pleasure? Does anybody like to start? What novels or fiction do you read for pleasure?

- I don't read a lot of like teenager children's books anymore but only when I did it was quite diverse when I read like I would read some sort of fancy fiction like Harry Potter or something, then sometimes just reading a book about you know school life or something is quite good as well because even though it's what you are used to, it's sort of very different because you can see other people's experiences of it so it's quite interesting to read about that.

RH - And what do you read now?

- Now I am actually reading *A Tale of Two cities* at the moment, but I mean I have just finished reading "Eating people is wrong" which is about you know British etiquette and things like that and it's quite funny in a sort of you know observational like sort of way ya it's good.

RH - Thank you, anyone else like to chip in and say what they like reading?

- I like reading kind of, well .. quite obvious on the whole… like *The Kite Runner* and I really enjoyed when I read it and one like a couple of years ago like I just pick up random books off book shelves that I like, like I ended up reading *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, which I was probably a little bit young to read when I did read it but at the same time I think the kind of idea that a book, just because it's, appeals to adults as well it's not suitable for children I don't that's right, I know that I read that book when I was like, I was either 13 or 14, but it was really good because it kind of showed like a kind of journey within her life it was kind of something I hadn't really given much thought and because it was well written it was interesting because it kind of moved on quite a lot, something I'd like to read again perhaps in a couple of years.

RH - Interesting, a good book as well. Any of the rest of you, what do you like reading or maybe don't real at all, it doesn't matter I'm just interested.

- I tend to read sort of more in terms of, sort of broadly science fiction based stuff but it's not like sort of lazers and thing which is what people, if you say science fiction what people instantly think is stuff like Star Trek, which makes it seem very very awful and nerdy but like stuff like JG Ballard and Will Self short stories which I really enjoyed by them. I'd sort of catergorised as science fiction but it is actually more about current science and sort of ethical issues brought up by that, then anything futuristic but alien.

RH - Interesting. And anybody else like to add anything?

- I've always read sort of more adult books like *Guest* , then I did read a few more teenage and children's' books like a couple of years ago , now a couple which I really enjoyed but them a lot which I really found boring and not much to them but now I barely read at all I only really read sort of I don't know autobiographies and stuff.

RH - No that's fine. You mentioned there were a couple of books you liked and a couple you didn't, could you remember a title that you liked and a title that you didn't?

- I liked *The knife of never letting go* and that series, I didn't like one called *Seeker* which I read like the first three chapters and it's so bad, so boring and the vocabulary was like primary school so I didn't carry on with that.

RH - That is interesting, vocabulary. Anybody else?

- I used to read a lot of teenage fiction like from when I was quite young for like when I started reading it, it was old for me and then I struggle to sort of move on zinto reading *Wuthering Heights* and I really struggle reading that and it kind put me off reading for a while so at the moment I am reading short stories by David Sarky?? and I'm kind of looking at more short stories because that is what we are doing in the course and I find them easier to read that even if they are quite difficult in understanding them they are just short stories so you it is easier to get your head round them. I think I sort of missed, there is like a gap between teenage and adult fiction and I struggled sort of across it as such.
- I started reading *Wuthering Heights* like a month ago, less than that, a week ago, something like that but I really wasn't getting into it and because I hadn't read for a while it was kind of putting me off a little bit so I just put it down and then I picked up a few days ago I picked up *A Picture of Dorian Gra*y like half way through that and it's like, it's books which are good like in different ways but with some other

novels like *Wuthering Heights* you have to be in the right mind set to start it because otherwise it's just going to be really boring.

RH - Why are you reading Wuthering Heights, is it pleasure or course or, two of you mentioned it?

- I read it because you sort of with a lot of the books I pick up I hear about them as they are supposed to be really good and I think it's really hard to find like a book that you just see when in a shop or in the library that you just pick up and think Oh I have never heard of this author I've never heard of this title I am going to read it because it's sort of like a risk that you don't really want to take in that sort of sense so I heard about *Wuthering Heights* that it was a really good novel and I thought I'd just pick it up and read it and see how I've gone, but I don't like picking up a book and then just putting it down and never reading it again, I feel I have to finish it so I sort of struggled to get through it but I did enjoy it, I found it was a bit too depressing like I know we said happy ending isn't vital but the same way like it just kept getting worse and worse. It was still good, I did like the plot and things like that and I like the vocabulary and things like that and it is quite complicated and I felt a sense of achievement once I had finished it because I can now have my say on that book and things like that and it's good I think.

RH - Well let's just take up that point that several of you have mentioned about teenage fiction and adult books. People talk about teenage fiction, young adults and you made that, I think two of you said that thing about you have moved on beyond teenage books, how do you define teenage or young adult fiction, what would be your criteria for that?

- Mostly it's where it's located in a bookshop, a good indictor usually.
- I wouldn't be able to tell just from a book, well maybe once you have read it you would sort of know but there isn't really a criteria I'd just say someone ranks somewhere and I will listen to those rankings.
- I think you can tell sometimes when you read a book that whoever wrote it had in mind that they were going for an audience who was not simpler but like they weren't trying to hum up, maybe they weren't even enjoying it that much themselves when they wrote it but it's like that, if I write the, umm what is it called,
- Anthony Horowitz
- Yeah I read those ones, I really enjoyed those but you know they are designed for children and that's fine but I think you can tell when they write to meet a certain goal… it's just trying to keep you entertained rather than writing it as a piece of art as a literature rather than just entertainment.

RH - So what are the things that make a book, I'll try to get to the heart of what it is, entertaining for children you used the word children do you have a sort of age on that?

- Maybe under 16
- Yeah end of primary beginning of secondary school like that
- I think in that middle stages sort of that's when you try to cross the line so you are sort of maybe reading an adult based book another day and then a teenage book the other day, or one that's not really definable. I think an important thing to have the mind when you are thinking about whether a book would be enjoyed by children is whether the protagonist is near their age like most children's books the narrator or the main character or whatever is a child which you know children relate to you, I can't think of any that have and adult as the protagonist unless it's you know a really young children's book and it's like *Mrs. Pepperpo*t or something I don't know.

RH - It's interesting.

- You also often get like a kind of progression with characters in book that tend to appeal to children and some of the adults as well, like *Chinese Cinderella* it's a book all falling leads and ??? which one you read. It's show how when she was younger and going through like ??? kind of biographical but it shows her progressing through difficulties and then kind of getting over and that is quite a common theme whereas when you get into the more adult books it tends to be often you end not end much you started but there is, it's less obvious the way that people change.

RH - Interesting.

- That's true, a lot of children's books which you probably identify the fact that in stuff like series especially with things like Alex Rider and possibly with stuff like Harry Potter as well you could say that within the books although the author says they are getting older maybe by a year in each book there is nothing within their circumstance that is significantly changing like if you took out Alex Rider as an example within every single book you still, you know, getting up to all sorts of things but nothing actually changes like he doesn't have to go and get a job in one, where you know if it was any sort of realistic book you would sort of face the fact that by you know book 12 he'd be an accountant. And within sort of we could cast as adult but a lot of the time they either don't have sequels or when they do have sequels there is a significant change and what it's done is to highlight the

fact that the protagonist you are meant to identify with in the first one has changed or adapted to a situation in the second.

RH - Anyone else wants to add anything to that, some very interesting points of view.

- I would say children's books are a lot more simple in the sort of, it's hard ….themes…in Harry Potter is an example but it's quite an obvious one. J.K. Rowling is not a, there are no like implications behind, you can't read into it but like with adult fiction there is a lot more like you can learn a lot more from it, you have to, you can just read Harry Potter without really thinking and it's all very descriptive and there is nothing that you have to sort of really think hard about but I think in a lot of what I would define as adult fiction you would have to sort of a lot of the time you have to sort of think about what the author is trying to imply, yet they try and understand what they are trying to write about rather than just plain description.
- There are more assumptions as well like in adult books you might have to do a little bit of further research into the situation like if you are reading say a hundred and ….you might want to do a little bit of further research into what was going on in the location at the time just to get a sense, whereas with younger novels they break you in gently to what is going on and there it doesn't really matter where it is or what it is because it is kind of a similar thing and with series as well like we were saying quite a lot of younger books have series because it's like when you pick up you know what to expect it going to be much like the one you read before but there is nothing wrong with that it's just a good way to break you in gently to having to develop with the characters rather than having to like, I don't know if any of you, like the *Chronicles of ancient Dartmouth* starts with *Wolf Brother* it's about Michelle Pavel and that is, I really enjoyed those, I read all of them. Although stuff changes within each book, you know what to expect when you pick it up and you know what you are going to get ….it's going to be so much the same so that's also a book which can appeal to adults in the sense that because it's out of context of modern day society whereas with series like say Harry Potter or Alex Ryder because they are so based around current day I think as you get older you clearly see the flaws in it because those ones were based in the past even though they are much similar and things probably weren't the way they are shown in the book because that is all the information you've got at the same time it's not, there is nothing wrong with reading it.

RH - that is fascinating. What I want to do now because I am watching the time and I am aware that we could go on all day, at least I could. I expect you are aware that

in the national curriculum it says, it talks about quality fiction and parents often want children to read quality books, now you are all, I think it is probably fair to say at the top end of the 11 to 16 age range, I think probably you are all about to be 16 or you are 16 already. Is that a fair comment?

- Yeah

RH - So you have already said with some of the comments you've made that in a way you are looking back, but if I was to ask you think is quality fiction try to come to some idea of defining this term, it is in the national curriculum, how would you define quality for those people in that 11 to 16 age range that you are coming out of now, what would your ideas be?

- I'd say something but required some sort of independent thought like I'm 15 and I read stuff like you sort of have to think about where as my sister is 15 for example, she was reading a series that must have been hundreds of books that all had the title *Mates, Dates and then X* which were just trash if you read them. Every book was the same sort of teen girl fiction where like that was directed specifically at girls and was sort of like the equivalent of a chick flicking a book that was just churned out again and again and again and again and I couldn't have seen there being any reason for it being made intellectually other than some sort of commercial cash card basically because a lot of girls will buy them and there were so many that a lot of girls would buy a lot of them and I wouldn't call that quality fiction because there was sort of no thought required, it was just narrative.
- I think that young children's books shouldn't be patronising which I found because when I was younger I used to read a lot of Jacqueline Wilson and I mean as I got to you know the age of 11 or 12 when I sort of was growing out of it a bit, it dawned on me that every book was written in the same style and the same voice and the same language for each character and the story lines even though they were about different problems they were very similar in the sort of dilemma that they encountered and it was always, it will more often than not, it was a girl that had come from a broken home or something and it just became very monotonous and it wasn't very challenging at all and I mean especially the vocabulary, and it just felt, you know you are being patronised, there wasn't any effort being put in to make you think more about the problem because it was just played down so much and played up by other aspects of the book and it was just frustrating in a way so, I mean I am not saying that it's necessarily bad quality it is just not something that I enjoyed.

RH - So you are looking for variety and language and narrative?

- I think keep it different for each book.

RH - You put that very well. Anybody else got any ideas about this quality?

- I think the impact, the one we put at the top about the making you think, I think for a teenager that's quite important, I think the books, I can't really think of an example but the book that I read when I was younger that I enjoyed the most were ones that you were still thinking about after you'd finished them and I think it's impossible to define quality in it, that is hard but, it's also subjective really but I think for me that is what I would enjoy most in a novel that I was still thinking about it even once I'd finished it and I think that's probably what drives people to get the next one in the sort of series, that they are still thinking about it once they have finished it and they sort of want to know more and so they get the next one and then things like that so I think the most important thing in a quality novel something that you are still thinking about once you'd finished it and this sort of impact that it has on you even whilst you are reading it or even I don't know after you've finished it.
- I agree that you need to sort of keep thinking about it but I think there is more you can take away come a quality not for sort of instructs you or gives you a new outlook on life and helps you to deal with situations and I think it can do more than just make you think about the book I think it can for a lake go wider set of issues and I think you can apply the book to your own life and maybe it's changed you.

RH - I wonder again and I'm watching the clock and I'm aware of the time, I wondered just going round if each of you has got a book in the, we have sort of established what the teenage fiction genre is, so thinking back to your own reading and books you know about, anything you would recommend to say a thirteen/fourteen year old that you think represents the quality features that you have identified.

- I think even though it's been made into a film so might be a bit sort of glorified in a way I think *Aragon* is a book to read because it is not too patronising, the plot is quite complicated and you know you do think about it a lot but I read it before it was made into a film and I haven't actually seen the film and I have purposely not watched it because I don't want to sort of see it in a different way than I already have plus it's got a sequel, I can't remember what it's called
- *Eldest* and then …. *Gun*?

- Yeah and I think that, I haven't read the last one but I think the sequel that I read was good as well and I think it is complicated enough to not be patronising and not be you know talking down to so called children's level.
- And it was written by someone when he was about 16 and he sort of develops throughout the series and it get more complicated, more adult so I think if you start with Aragon, read through it might help you in the future with more complicated books.

RH - That is excellent and anybody else got one that you could recommend.

- I think it is pushing on children's fiction but when I was sort of teenager or young year I read *Lord of the Rings* I think while a lot of people will have seen the film and not read the book, I think it is good to sort of, it's got quite complicated vocabulary, it's got quite complicated sort of plot and things like that and I think it's good to sort of push yourself and I think it will be easier for them to read it as they've probably seen the films and they sort of understand what's going on and I think it'll have been, because it's like complicated, it's sort of a bridge like I mentioned between adult and teenage fiction, so I would recommend that one, even though it is quite long.
- I'd say that when you are trying to pick a book for someone to read, you can't get the age bracket and then just give them a list of books and say this is sort of quality for your age and I'd say definitely when you are looking for sort of children to early teens the first thing that should be looked at almost before quality is how much they can enjoy a book because I think if you get someone and you get them to that age and they haven't really been introduced a lot to it other than really really childish books and then they are not interested then there is no reason that they would want to read, and I think the first thing to do is sort of make them want read outside of lessons and sort of introduce some mentality of reading independently and then they can enjoy the books for themselves rather than sort of being told what's good about them.
- I think often people underestimate what young people can read like, when you are younger even if you weren't fully get to grips with all of the concepts they might bring out at the same time you can, most people are working or reading, perhaps more complicated of adult fiction but you get adult fiction which can be quite, like kind of holiday reads that you might read when you go on holiday, I think those are good for children as well like I'd much rather, when you, you get certain books like *The Kite Runner*, it's a book that lots of people have read because it's an easy read but it's also really interesting and it's like, I think that's

suitable for a young person because it's not written in an excessively complicated way, it's not there necessarily to underpin the kind of interest it's quite a lot in the subject matter which most people can get to grips with, so I think novels like that can appeal to, from the age of say 13 onwards, you start off with the simpler adult fiction when you get to about 13 and then as you get to say 16 then you can start reading hard literature which is going to be difficult to read and it's going to be require extra work, kind of thing to read it, but at the same time you get to enjoy it afterwards, so it's just a case of breaking you in gently into adult fiction straight away.

RH - I think it's a really good answer. I'm just going to ask you one final question because I've run over by 2 minutes; my thesis is going to be called "Maltesers or Carrots does it matter?", now that ties in with what you were saying, Maltesers in terms of reading are the nice easy things that slip down and give you comfort and Carrots are the ones you were talking about, I think you have all mentioned that you've got to chew on a bit but probably do you more good in some people's terms; let's just go round the table and say in terms of books for teenagers, Maltesers or Carrots, does it matter?

- I think when you say Maltesers or Carrots I don't think carrots you should see as being unenjoyable, I think even if they do challenge you I don't think you should enjoy them any less than Maltesers, I think a good example of that, like the classics, so for example, *Little Women*, I think that's something that can be read by quite young children as well as adults who read it because it's a classic and it's quite well respected and I think even though because I think that will probably be considered as a Carrot because it's you know well respected and everything but at the same time it does have a good plot it is enjoyable for younger children and you know they might like it a lot more than any of the you know trash that George is talking about.

RH - OK does anyone else got any feelings about Maltesers or Carrots, I think carrots can be enjoyable I absolutely agree with you but you get the sort of metaphor of something that slips down easily and the things that you've got to chew on but do you good and can be enjoyable too.

- I think you need to remember that with Maltesers like the Maltese can eat themselves, some teenage full of trash lecture might have some quite strong messages and might actually be quite crunchy and more carrot like.

RH- Yeah the Malt in it, yes definitely. Anybody else want to take the metaphor a bit further?

- I think you should also look at the difference between a carrot and perhaps trying to eat salt like, because if, with like *Wuthering Heights* that we talked about earlier, it's not, you have to want to force it upon yourself I think to start it, whereas if you compare it to, like H was saying "Little women", it's an enjoyable book, it's a nice one so I think it's not as clear cut a line but with the Maltesers you get books like *Refugee Boy* which are aimed at children but at the same time it's a really good book when I read it I really enjoyed it and it's something that you can get a bit further into and you can, it gives you an interest in the topic as well that if you get a range of books covering from like the potato famine in Ireland to issues in Afghanistan , people find it interesting to learn about new topics and it also gives them a capacity in conversation which a lot of young people lack and that's why they struggle when it comes to part taking in that transition into becoming an adult because they haven't got that wide a knowledge of the world.
- I think it's important like you don't want a teenager just to be eating carrots, if they kept trying to chew on these books that they found hard to read I think it's sort of unfair and sort of not practical for them just to keep doing it so I think there is a difference between them but you want to have a mix as well because you can't just keep struggling to read through books you've got to sort of have a mixture of ones that you find easy to read, ones that are difficult to read and ones that sort of bridging in between that sort of pushing yourself but are quite simple in plot and things like that so I think there is a distinct difference but I think you have to sort of take them both I think, you can't just have one or the other, you've got to have both otherwise it won't work.

RH - Excellent and any last words from anybody?

- I just think even it's true that you should try carrots and Maltesers, I think taking the metaphor of carrots as being good for you I think the more you read better books it sort of almost exercising you mind so that it does become easier to read more difficult books and so the more you read carrot books the less you'll want to read younger fiction or not as good quality fiction because you actually do see it as being you know lower quality and you prefer to read something that you've been reading like with the carrots I don't know.

RH - Well thank you all very much, it's been extremely enlightening I really appreciate you giving the time and if any of you think of anything else you'd like to tell me because often you go away and you think of, jot it down and give it to Mrs. X and then she can send it to me because I'd be really interested to hear if you have got any other thoughts, you've made me think as well. Thank you very much indeed.

Appendix 16d: Transcript extract 4: Interview with YR 8s at a comprehensive school

- I've got quite a lot of Jacqueline Wilson books and I can relate to most of those so I suppose it's like, because she is like young like 10 or 11 and she is as teenagers as well and this, well all of her books
- One of the books I can relate to is a Lauren Kate series because it's like kind of imaginary is like weird is like Gothic and it's kind of my thing now it's about a girl like when she falls in love and that and it just like shows different teenage years and all that but good though.

RH - so yeah

RH - Yes

- I like a novel that made me think while I was reading it, I was reading *The Hobbit* that I borrowed from my mum but I didn't get to finish it because I lost it and I had to think quite a lot about that and

RH - That was a good thing was it?

- Yeah
- A novel I would say would probably be Um I don't think it's Twilight but I think it's Becca Fitzpatrick, her novels are I think are pretty good because they are a bit more graphic and a bit better like they are cool

RH - I am really interested if you could just explain because what do you like to think about and now I am going to ask you what you think is better so, because that's what I am trying to get at because we will say these things and I really want to know what we mean by them, so what do you like to think about first of all

- Well I like to think about if something bad, I sort of think about what might happen afterwards and what the characters' feelings are and at the end of a book I try and think sort of a scenario that would happen after the ending

RH - Right so it's really engaging your imagination then ya that's interesting. And now C can you tell us, you said better and we often say that about book, so have a go, I know that's hard, but have a go tell me what you mean by better.

- I mean like more describing, like you know some books you read and you think, ah that's not really described enough it just says like 'a girl or something that's dead it just that she's gone down the stairs already they don't really say what so much going on like that

RH - So is it the language which really …

Yeah the format of it

RH - Yes, so the plot as well, what do you think, is it the language the way it's described or is it the way the story is put together do you think?

- It might be a little bit of both because if it's just put together and then it always have to have like something going on as well and that

- I think it's a good idea to have like a book and then it's like released into a whole series about the same characters because you know what's going on with the characters like the previous books and then it comes to an end and it comes as a surprise and you are like how that's not really to go with it it's like that, it's kind of hard to explain.

RH - Yes. An interesting question is Harry Potter is finished; do think that was right, would you like to see it go on longer?

- I'd like to read a book about Harry's kids, his friend's kids and what they might get up to at Hogwarts

……

…..*RH - Yes, so the cover sometimes gives you that clue.*

- Don't judge a book by its cover.
-
- A good novel would be about current issue to do with teenagers, I read a book like that, it was called *Megan* and it was about this 15 year old girl who got pregnant and her mum wanted her to have it adopted and when it finished it was just when she was having the baby, but there is another book don't know but it's quite good because I thought is really sort of true to life*, the stories, ya*

RH - What do you think, X,about this?

- I read a book once and it was about a girl in the olden days and she like was getting her parents absolutely didn't like her and they managed to get rid of her so they put her for some weird reason in the book, they put her into asylum, it was like a weird prison, they weren't allowed to go out but it's just rare and it turned out in the end that she, Oh I don't know what happened it was ages ago when I read that book, it turned out in the end I think she, oh I can't remember

RH…….- What do you think about this idea that you write books for teenagers which are about things in their life like exams or dieting or bullying or boyfriends and girlfriends, do you think teenagers want to read those kinds of books?

- I don't really, I read books about like weird yucky stuff like that ……But I don't, I think some of my mates, they read like ones with different ??? stars and I don't really know what's going on in the book
-
- I do read quite a lot of books like that because I've got, nearly all of Jacqueline Wilson's books, they have quite a lot of Meg Cabot roles.
-
- Yeah. I think they are quite good considering that someone but an adult that has written it, ……..adults have clean teenagers, so yeah……
-
- ……It's like a lot of classical books like *The Railway Children* and *The Secret Garden*, they've had films made about them, like including I've seen the film and then after I've seen the film, I am sitting oh wouldn't you like to read the book and I've not even known there was book.

RH - Have you read the book afterwards?

- No I've got it at home

RH - ……..if people say the word 'teenage fiction' or 'young adult fiction' to you, and you are in that age group, it is sort of 11 to 16 year old age group, what sort of books do you think they are talking about what might be in those books? What sort of books would they be?

- Romance probably, the most common one, probably a bit of like, I don't know, like imagination like a bit of Um quiet.
- It's like Cathy Cassidy books

RH - Right

- She uses quite a lot of imagination and she does, I think she does books that have quite a lot to do about Ireland because in one of her books called 'Scarlet' there is this Scarlet and she has to go over there because she is too disobedient and it's quite imaginative because she had to do a lot of research and she had to find out later stuff that they actually did then she had to put in for another one about like the wish trees and stuff like that.

RH - Interesting. So romance and description you said, anything else?

- Probably be laughter, a bit of humour ya, because you can't have like just romance you've got to have like a bit of like funny stuff in it and might have like an argument between friends, boyfriends, girlfriends and all that
- I think things to do that happen in school as well, sort of makes teenager and younger teenagers want to read it because, and sometimes it might have happened to them and they can read it and sort of like make them feel better

RH - Yes so it's coming back to that idea you can learn from reading about it ?. What do you think makes one teenage book better than another, people talk a lot about quality we've said word haven't we so what would you think made a good quality book for people of your age?

- Um probably be one that grabs your attention from the first like word, like you know I've read a book and it just started off with just like running or something it was just like weird it was just like her having a battle or like being and all that and then it just like eventually it just said like before like earlier, like six months earlier or something and it was why it happened and it just goes on from there, I like to look at books like that, I think it's pretty cool.

RH - So first word or first page is it, it has got to grab you?

- Yeah
-
- Just I am writing a book

RH - Alright tell me about it

- It's called *Dark Shadows and Electric Dreams*, it's about two girls one called Megan one called Katie and she is, one girl like gets killed by this shadow deep in and there is a weird creature called Frankenstein, I based it on that type of crime, man thing, *sever people and like made him like being the good guy to help I think another girl out* in the captors like and help her out from getting these dreams but why he's doing that he is actually trying to transmit like information into her mind while she is sleeping, what's going on and all that so. I writing another one as well.

RH - Are you? What's that one, is that going to be a fantasy? Because it's sort of you said Gothic fantasy, didn't you, I can see the influence there. Is this next one the same?

- No I've written a totally different book, that was just the one and that I am trying to *improve on, but I've written a scrap one it called 'Love, Hate and Mysterious Demons'*

RH - Right

- And I was just going randomly like Twilight type of stuff, stuff like that and I've written a page, a different thing as well, I just do loads of writing, it's called Devil's Punishment and it's about this devil who needs, he is describing hell and what it's like for him and how he really get that and all that and it's all in one page

RH - Wow sounds tremendous I'd love to see that. And what about youY? Quality what you think is quality?

- For me it's like catching fun cover and if I like the look of the cover, my Mum always says she know when I've been around because it there is books lying around and I like the cover I kind of ?? read the blurb and just leave it with the back facing up

RH - How interesting! What are you looking for when you read, well in the cover and in the blurb, so what are you actually looking for?

- Interesting sort of front designs and on the back sort of comments that newspapers have said and if they say it's better than another book that I've read then I like read it and see if it is so

RH - I am just interested to know what makes an interesting front cover?

- I don't know something you don't really necessarily put with the title

RH - Right.

And for me it's sort of about people ???? photos and images and sort of like match them together and stuff like that

- I always go for books that are like quite creepy at the front cover

……

- I know I'm going on about Jacqueline Wilson

RH - No please do

- The first ever book like read of hers was *Bad Girls* and I found it, well I was only 8 when I finished reading it so I found it quite emotional because there is this little ten year old girl Mandy, she has this friend called Tanya and in the end Tanya gets sent away and in this behavioural centre and she has to go to court because she was shoplifting but because her Mum committed suicide and her sister and her little brother got split up she is not really behaving properly and at the end it had this postcard thing and she wasn't very good at learning so the illustrator Nick Shout had sort of drawn the postcard and did sort of drawn the postcard and did sort of swoopy handwriting to make it look like she wasn't good and basically saying I hope I see you soon but Mandy's mum wasn't really convinced

RH - ……Why do you think you can still remember it is it the plot? Is it the characters? What do you think it is?

- I think it was the illustrations I looked at, Nick Shout is a really good illustrator and I used to try and draw like him but I can't do it, I think it was mostly that because he used pens on the outside because Mandy the little girl used to like doing colouring and she had loads of rainbow pens so each chapter was different colour of the rainbow.
-
- And I think all the bright colours as well like dreamy

RH - What about you X, can you think of a book that you would say was really good quality that you would recommend to someone of your age?

RH - Can you tell us a little bit about it and why you think it's good quality?

- I think it is good quality because I read it like five times or even more and it is really good, every time I read it I always think it's like it grabs my attention almost instantly I think it is really good and it has like a girl called Lucinda and she is like, her mum and she like had a friend that was murdered and she got the blame but turned out it wasn't her it was someone else and she got burned in the fire and her hair and her head had to be shaven off and she had to be sent to this other school which was more like for the ones like gone down a bit and she moved there and she had to live there and she met a crazy friend called Irene, she was like completely crazy like little pixie and all that, she had a sister as well but she wasn't like Irene she was a bit more mmmmm like that but Irene and Lucinda they like turned out to be like sisters and then she Irene like is like turned out to be an angel and like Lucinda falls in love with this guy and like she finds out that he's an angel, there another guy he is the enemy and he is like a demon and she's got another friend as well and they are all angels and demons and they're just battling now and trying to figure everything out but it's really good

RH …… so what is it about that book?..

Oh I can read it for the fifth the sixth time

- The plot and the writing I can't really describe it but I think it's just really like amazing even though it has no illustrations or pictures or anything, the pictures are actually in the words themselves

RH - Oh that's a very good word description, can I push you a little bit further, can you explain what you mean by that, can you think of examples, can you think of ways that it's appealed to you.

- The writing seems to have flowed and you know sometimes you get like writing and it has comas full stops and just stops, I don't know if that makes sense, but this writing just seems to have flown more even though it's just like no breaks at all, it adds more to the excitement and it flows, it's all calm though, it shows like the pictures in the actual writing as like if you say like the wings were like fluttering like the angels I don't know but like that and it's just like showed the picture in your mind with the words actually on the page and you are thinking wow that's really good.

RH - So fundamentally it's the words on the page is it?

- Mm

RH - What about the plot and the characters because you've explained the plot to me and it's obviously quite a complicated plot is it?

- Yeah it is, but it's understandable though

RH. ……What do you mean by understandable?

- Because you know complicated plots you can't understand that much because the writing doesn't actually flow but in this one because the writing does flow and it seems to make a lot more sense the plot is complicated and yet it's easy to understand that type of way

RH - Yes I see. And can I just ask you about the characters and I'll come back to you.

- Lucinda she about 17 years old and she is got like long black hair she wears that kind of Gothicy dresses and she likes sports she likes different stuff she likes drawing and that and it's really good at the start it show them like in the past, she turns out that she has been living from like centuries and centuries and them two fall in love all the time
-
- And it keeps going on and on and on like and I find it really kind of romantic like really cool I think it's almost true, it's so good

RH - That does sound an incredible plot, what's the book called again?

- *Fallen* by Lauren Kate
-
- It's hard to describe the book and I've read *Torment* and that's really good, it starts like they are all talking and then it just goes like zooms in to like her living now as she is on her own in an island by herself and that

RH - You know what I'm going to say, ***really good****, what does that mean?*

- Really good, like I mean like ha ha ha
- That I keep on reading so I always know like every single letter of it and I think it's because you can, like you've read it once and you know what's going to happen but you like the suspense that it still gives
  ……
  ….

RH - So what gives the suspense do you think?

- Um I don't know, I do but, I think it's because sometimes you might not remember or if you do remember but you don't sort of, you can't remember how it goes exactly so you just keep on reading and then it does come back to you but you still need bits

RH - so it's good detail is it?

- MMM
- Hard to explain

RH - It is hard, have you thought how you could explain really good yet?

- No.
- You don't use the word to describe the word

RH - Right

- Words like 'really good' is 'really good' you don't really use that it's just ha ha ha just making a point ha ha but you could like 'really good' means like for me it's like the book has to be eye grabbing and yet brain like my brain just got in like the pictures in my head and that sort that's why I described it really good,

RH - I like that your brain gets in the book! I think that's a really good way of putting it so come on Y, what about you? It was really good, you're not allowed to say your brain gets in the book, we've had that one …

- A really good book would be better than all the others that I've previously read, the one that stuck out in my memory quite a lot and made me think about it and effectively emotionally

RH - Go on…. That is really interesting 'affected you emotionally'! Can you tell me what the book was and how it affected you because I'm very interested in that.

- It's always the Harry Potter books ……Ya it's Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince, and it's the part where Dumbledore dies ……I actually started crying

RH - I think that's absolutely brilliant it's almost like the end of a story that isn't it a really good book is one that engages your brain and your heart. You've talked to eloquently and so well about the books is there anything else you'd like to say to me about teenage books that I haven't thought to ask you, that you'd like me to know, you as people who read books like this?

- Maybe like I said before that you could start off with something going on straight away and then say something that was going to happen in the actual book and then it would go on to the bit that you said at the start, try and do that, it makes it grab your attention, you are thinking what's going on, did I just miss the series or what's going on like that.

RH - So that's almost plot isn't it?

- Yeah
- Well I think with quite a few teenagers they mature more mentally than they do physically, so I know with me I really want to start reading sort of more adult books and my older brother, when he was a teenager he used to read like adult horror books like James Herbert and Steven King so I think it really depends on the type of person's personality and what they actually do as hobbies and stuff that influences them as a teenager and what they read

  ……
  ……..

RH - what do you think about the books that you have to read in school?, ….

- Well before I moved here from F…, we had to read *Private Peaceful* and I thought it was really good because, I don't know if it was WW1 or 2 ……
- And I thought it was quite good because it was explaining, you can tell they were counting down from something but like you didn't know what and then in the end it turned out to be Charlie's brother or I think Charlie is his name I am not sure, like his execution

RH - Ah, so you enjoyed that one that was chosen?

RH - What about you X? Can you think of any books you've read in school that you thought have been really good choices for all of you really.

- *Holes*, in the movie it showing brief with Angelina Jolie's dad and that and it's about this guy and he is like, it's kind of mixed two stories like old new and it's all mixed together it's like pulling them through again and again and it was like a guy got hit on the head by shoes and he turned out he actually met the guy at the camp, the green lake camp
- I have not read it

RH - Is there anything else either of you would like to say about the books?

- I always feel my books are like my friends I sort of don't do stuff to them that I wouldn't like done to me but I'm like mad about books so I would.

RH - That's great, what's made you mad about books?

- Well I think I've grown up with old books and new books all around me because every single room there has got to be a book shelf so and my mum always used to read to me when I was little and used to tell me all like all the really old Enid Blyton books that she used to read and I've got quite a lot of those and I think it was last year I went to Bude and there is this really nice little bookshop called 'Books by the Sea' and I picked up a nineties year old Grimms fairy-tale book for £2

RH - Wow that's quite valuable, so you really love books I can tell and you like writing them as well. I am going to say thank you very much, that's been amazing.

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